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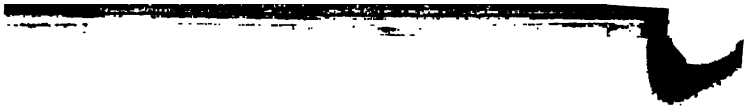

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TO

THE REV. DR. CHALMERS,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE,

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when that is warmed, as it were, and often unexpectedly illuminated, by the direct rays emanating from the Word of Truth—conclusions may be less logical—and arguments less precise—but the "word spoken" may nevertheless "profit" —more than volumes, read with listless acquiescence, apart from the Scriptures they illustrate.

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older human bosom—it will be gratefully ascribed to the blessing of Him, who has made "*searching* the Scriptures" a ground for specific praise—and "feeding the *lambs* of His flock," the subject of a last and affecting command.

ERRATA.

Page 19, line 5, from the top, for, "no peace *now* to the wicked," read, "no peace to the wicked."

Page 35, line 9, from the top, for, "in last chapter," read, "in *the* last chapter."

MORNINGS WITH MAMA.

Fourth Series.

MORNING FIRST.

LESSON.—1st Samuel, Chapters xiii. and xiv.

MAMA. Do you remember, Mary, with what striking and affecting incidents the final resignation of the aged prophet Samuel's delegated authority over the children of Israel, into the hands of the king they had foolishly desired, was attended?

MARY. Yes. First he defied any one to say he had wronged or oppressed him; and then God answered his prayer by sending rain and thunder at the time of wheat harvest, when, you told me, such things were hardly ever heard of.

MAMA. True; but did this alarming, and (had it been allowed to continue) seemingly vindictive exercise of the prophet's influence with Heaven, form the closing feature of his intercourse with the people he had, like his predecessor Moses, so long loved and borne with?

MARY. No, no. When they saw their error in asking a king, and besought his prayers, the good old man said, "God forbid he should ever cease to pray for them," and gave them the best advice, to "fear the Lord, and serve him in truth," if they would prosper, they and their king.

MAMA. We are now to see how, in the latter case especially, the advice was obeyed. How long had Saul borne that character when our present chapter (the 13th, 1st Samuel) commences?

MARY. I don't know, Mama. At first it says he "reigned *one* year," and in the same verse, that "he had reigned *two*."

MAMA. This has puzzled older heads than your's, Mary, and the most probable way of reconciling it is, that *one* year had elapsed from Saul's anointing, at the period of Samuel's public resignation in the last chapter; and *two* before the events recorded in the one we have just read, viz. the permanent establishment of his regular army, and dismissal of the residue to their homes and occupations.

What was the first exploit of the body thus selected, or "chosen" out of Israel, and under whom was it achieved?

MARY. Oh! Jonathan, Saul's son, good, kind,

generous, Jonathan! One of the reasons, Mama, why I wished so much to read again about David, was to hear more of Jonathan. I always liked him so much, when I was quite a child, for not being jealous of David.

MAMA. True, Mary; bravery and generosity are qualities peculiarly calculated to win the affections of childhood; and in both, this amiable young man eminently excelled. Against whom was the former at this time directed?

MARY. The Philistines; the old enemies of Israel, we read so much of in Samuel's time. No wonder they hated the Israelites, since they had suffered so much from sickness for taking and keeping the ark! But why did Saul "blow a trumpet throughout the land, to let all the Hebrews hear it?"

MAMA. Probably to recall to his standard in this emergency, (for the Philistines, we read, were gathered like the sand on the sea shore,) some of the fighting men he had recently disbanded. The peril was indeed great. For though *thirty* thousand chariots is supposed by the best commentators to be an error for *three*, yet, when we consider what we formerly heard of the formidable and destructive character of these war chariots, by which men were mowed down in their ranks, like corn before the sickle—

and when we remember that at the very time of this invasion the children of Israel did not possess a smith of their own, but were compelled to go to those very Philistine garrisons (one of which they so boldly attacked under Jonathan) to sharpen even their implements of husbandry—we shall cease to wonder that it was with "fear and trembling" these long oppressed bondmen obeyed the heroic summons of their king. Still less can we wonder at, or blame him, for feeling as if at this crisis the Divine protection and sanction *alone* could enable him to face his foes. But oh! Mary, few things in the Bible so strongly enforce on us all, the Almighty's decided preference of "obedience" over "sacrifice," as the signal displeasure of God at the invasion of the priestly functions by the seeming piety of Saul. The excuses for it, in human eyes, were cogent and numerous. The people, thoroughly disheartened, not only hid themselves in caves, and thickets, and rocks, but some of the more timid actually fled to their brethren beyond Jordan; and were (as Saul afterwards, to justify himself, declared) so "scattered from him" by gradual desertion, during the season when Samuel, like the great Power, whose minister he was, mysteriously "*delayed his coming*"—that human policy usurped *with him the place of* submissive obedience.

MARY. How sorry he must have felt, Mama, when he had done what was wrong in offering sacrifice, for just "as he had made an end of doing it, Samuel came!"

MAMA. Yes, Mary. The God whom Saul by his distrust had offended, sent, at his own "set time," the appointed minister of his will and service. And can we, even as finite creatures, wonder that the sinful impatience of the man he had raised from "seeking asses," to make him king over Israel, should have been rebuked by the ancient and *ever* faithful servant of God?

By what excuse did Saul (like our forefather Adam, and all his succeeding progeny) seek to palliate his infringement of the plain command of God, to "tarry for Samuel at Gilgal," and his assumption of the sacerdotal office?

MARY. He said he was afraid the Philistines would come upon him before he had made supplication to the Lord.

MAMA. Let us weigh this reason, my dear, not by its flimsy superficial appearance of piety, but in the just "balance of the sanctuary," by the unerring standard of the law of God. Could the enemies of Jehovah, whom, as such, he had so lately and signally humbled, attack his people but by his *express permission*? If so, why did *Saul go through the* mockery of invoking protec-

tion from Heaven at all? And if not, was this protection likely to be effectually purchased by a direct infringement of the Divine command? Or have we any instances, since the solemn institution of the Mosaic priesthood, of God's declaring that sacrifices might lawfully be offered by mere secular persons?

MARY. No! I remember even wicked Jeroboam saw it would not do to offer sacrifice himself, and so resolved to make priests to do it for him. And Micah, though he knew little of God, was delighted to get a Levite (such as he was) to *be his priest,* because he felt none else would be of any use. Even Saul knew that it was wrong, for he says, he "forced himself" to do it.

MAMA. That is to say, in plain language, he was goaded on, in defiance of his better judgment, by the mere human motives, (seemingly opposite, but not the less seldom found united in man,) of criminal distrust on the one hand, and presumptuous arrogance on the other.

How did the man of God, the "seer," whom long experience had taught to detest sophistry, and denounce sin, at once cut short the pretexts by which Saul had, till then, half succeeded in deceiving himself?

MARY. "Thou hast done foolishly."

MAMA. *Terrible* words! if we bear in mind,

that in Scripture phraseology "folly" and "wickedness" are strictly synonymous, that the "*fool* hath said in his heart, there is no God;" and that Saul, by not keeping his commandments, had (as we have often observed,) *practically* said the same thing; even while acknowledging him with his lips, and sacrificing on his altar.

By what denunciation was the honour and veracity of the Most High, very properly vindicated?

MARY. Saul's "kingdom was not to continue;" and "the Lord had sought him a man after his own heart," to be king instead of him.

MAMA. And for this apparent change in the (*we* know) immutable counsels of Jehovah, what is the express reason assigned?

MARY. "Because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

MAMA. These expressions, my dear, so characteristic of the leading deficiency in the conduct of Saul, would, if borne steadily in view, throw light on that striking feature in the public character of his successor, the reference to which, in his consequent designation of the "man after God's own heart," has so puzzled some, and scandalized others; and the perversion of which, to a sense never ntended by the sacred writer, has given

rise to a general "wresting" of the whole history of a right-minded, but very fallible mortal, by scoffers, ("to their own and other's destruction,") as implying Divine connivance at, or even approbation of sin; and by pious persons, to the scarcely less dangerous error of palliating and glossing over the private transgressions of the supposed favourite of Heaven, by applying to them the discriminating praise, here simply awarded to his public zeal for, and obedience to the commands of the Lord. If you yourself, as you tell me, and indeed the youngest unsophisticated readers of the chequered biography of the shepherd king of Israel, are painfully struck with the discrepancy between the high encomium of our chapter, and the sad enormities which stained the private life of one thus enviably distinguished—we cannot wonder that, by the malignant comments of enemies to the Bible on the one hand, or the mistakes of injudicious friends on the other, the whole history of David has been converted into a "stumbling-block," or "rock of offence," which many, I believe, would almost wish removed altogether from the Christian's path.

But that it may not prove so to you, my dear child, I cannot better, perhaps, than now, at its *very threshold,* put you in possession of the only *key to its difficulties,* furnished by the labours of

the hosts of able and excellent men, whose talents have been devoted to its elucidation. David, then, while in his hatred to idolatry, and zeal for the living God, he is justly held up as a contrast to disobedient Saul, and a pattern to future Jewish monarchs—may, in his private and far more imperfect character, be viewed as reflecting no less truly, the occasional lapses into gross sin, the humbling inconsistencies, but prevailing spirit of penitence and devotedness to God, which characterize the erring, yet sincere Christian. And sure I am, that none such can behold, reflected as in a mirror, his own easily besetting sins, in the less praiseworthy parts of this much abused chapter in the annals of human nature—without feeling inclined, instead of joining the scoffer in his sneer at the palpable blots in the picture—rather to shrink abased in the comparison with the deep penitential fervour, and ardent renewed obedience, by which the falls of David were, on the first awakenings of conscience, immediately succeeded. And now that your age, and increasing acquaintance with spiritual things, leads me to hope that our joint consideration of it in this light, may be blessed to our mutual benefit,—I feel glad that your expressed wish on the subject overcame the *perhaps* sinful cowardice, which *had made me half* shrink from the discussion,

and leave you to grope your way unaided through a thorny, but most improveable field of moral discipline. We shall have abundant reason as we go along by comparing especially that precious treasury of the inmost sentiments of David, contained in his Psalms, with the circumstances in his external history which gave them birth—to be convinced that the interesting record was truly written, like other Scriptures, for "reproof, for example, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness."

We must now, however, pass to the victory granted by God to the not yet fully discarded monarch of Israel. By whose valour was it specially won?

MARY. Oh! Jonathan's to be sure. Only he and his armour-bearer ventured over into the midst of a whole army of Philistines.

MAMA. This sounds rash and presumptuous, Mary. What could have led them to expect success in so hazardous an attempt?

MARY. Jonathan said, perhaps the Lord would "work for them; and that it was all the same to *Him*, to save by many, or by few."

MAMA. So that, what would have otherwise been unjustifiable rashness, sprung from unbounded *trust in God*, and was recompensed accordingly. *Such you know*, was the spirit in which we

shall by and bye see the youthful friend of Jonathan, go out "in the strength of his God," against the gigantic champion of the same Philistines. How did *He* who paralyzed before David the mighty arm of the giant of Gath, now blind the understanding, and "confound the devices of his people's enemies?"

MARY. The very sentries, who should have kept them out, invited Jonathan and his companion up; and he saw directly that it was God who had so infatuated them; and this made them as bold as lions, and able to kill twenty men.

MAMA. Yet they would probably, when the first surprize was over, have fallen victims to numbers, had not a strong "spirit of delusion" from the Lord, turned the fury of these Philistines against each other.

But by what singular and barbarous enactment did the brave young prince of Israel, narrowly escape losing his life?

MARY. Mama! it was something like Jephtha's vow, only not quite so bad. Saul had rashly sworn, that any one should die who tasted food till the sun was down; and Jonathan, who knew nothing of it, was faint, and glad to find some wild honey.

MAMA. *Yes;* we have another trait of the *same impatient and* precipitate character, which

what deed of this kind had the Kenites earned the gratitude of Israel?

MARY. I suppose when Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, delivered them by killing Sisera. Though a cruel action for a woman, it was a great thing for Israel, and I suppose saved the lives of thousands of innocent people. I have understood that much better since we talked it over, and so I shall, I daresay, this about Agag. Indeed, I know already Saul had no right to spare his life, when God had forbidden him to save any one.

MAMA. And I do not know my dear, that any explanation could add to the force of what you have simply and unconsciously stated, as to the exact cause of Saul's apparent clemency proving displeasing to God. But, besides the direct contravention of a plain, but awfully expressed command, there were two features in the transaction peculiarly insulting to the Being whom Saul professed with his lips to honour and revere. The first was an arrogant assumption on the part of his mere human instrument, of that power to absolve and punish, which belongs of right to him "in whose hands are the keys of hell and of death;" and the second was the insolent attempt to propitiate one who prefers "obedience" before "sacrifice," with an offering of the very spoils which, as an abomination in his sight, he had de-

voted to utter destruction. "Shall man be more just than his Maker?" might indeed have been addressed, by the indignant prophet, to him who had "taken upon him to speak peace," when God himself had said there should be "no peace" even to the "wicked." And well might he, with reference to the second insulting mockery—have asked—"what meaneth this bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen in mine ears?" if indeed the "command of the Lord" had been implicitly performed?

MARY. Mama! I see it all. And I don't even think (as I once did) that it could be out of tender heartedness Saul saved Agag alive, because he was so ready, just before, to have put his own son to death, for innocently taking a little honey.

MAMA. Yes, Mary; so disproportionately did this capricious tyrant estimate a slight transgression against his own arbitrary decree, and a whole life of provocation against the Most High—that the same hand which scrupled not to sign, in the midst of his meritorious success, a brave and amiable son's death warrant, refused to execute on an inveterate foe, the just sentence of the Almighty! Pride, and self-will, Saul's two besetting sins, were, we may be sure, at the bottom of what passes, *with the unthinking*, for commendable

these wars continued all the days of Saul, was probably chiefly owing to that withdrawal of direct and supernatural aid, which, we shall see in our next chapter, his ingratitude and disobedience, so justly and fatally provoked.

Let us learn in the meantime, from those of to-day, the decided preference of "Him with whom we have to do," of obedience over empty professions, or even ritual observances; the jealousy with which He guards his own hallowed institutions; His power of working confusion to his enemies, by the most apparently inadequate means; the inconvenience, as well as sinfulness of rash oaths, and the applicability to all such of our Lord's injunction, "swear not at all." Let us apply also, in a spiritual sense, what is casually dropped of the continued and indecisive warfare, which distinguished the unquiet reign of Saul, when forsaken of God, and left to his own unassisted valour and ferocity. Thus it is with the unrenewed man, and his ever unsubdued spiritual enemies. Attacked in his own strength, or at times irresolutely connived at, they harass and embitter to its last hour, his brief and stormy pilgrimage; and of him it may be said, as of the restless perturbed career of the rejected tyrant of Israel, "*There is* no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

MORNING SECOND.

LESSON.—1st Samuel, Chapters xv. and xvi.

MAMA. In the first of these chapters, my dear Mary, we have the history of that fresh instance of disobedience, by which Saul's threatened forfeiture of the kingdom, was, though still deferred, rendered final and irrevocable; and in the next, that anointing of his successor, which though as yet confined to the "secret counsel" of the Most High, was not the less a sure pledge of future sovereignty, to him on whom it was so wonderfully conferred.

What special and solemn injunction of the God he had so lately (and as he alleged) unwillingly offended,—did Saul now take upon him directly to question and disobey?

MARY. An awful one! to "smite Amalek," and "utterly destroy men, women, and children, and the very cattle!"

MAMA. *Awful indeed*, Mary! and a severity *of Divine justice reserved* (as we have already

his deserved doom was about to come upon him, aggravated by the vain-glorious respite of Saul!

MARY. One cannot help being a little sorry for Agag, and vexed that Samuel should have to be his executioner.

MAMA. On the former point, I think you may be relieved by what is said here and elsewhere of the personal cruelty of the Amalekite tyrant, which rendered his death an act of just retribution. And as to the latter, Samuel is never supposed to have taken on himself an office, inconsistent with the sanctity of the priestly character, but merely to have sanctioned and presided at the judicial execution of Agag.

There cannot, perhaps, be a stronger contrast between genuine and spurious sensibility, the which you yourself remarked, of the reluctance of bloody Saul to sacrifice God's enemy, and the unhesitating readiness to do so of the gentle, mild Samuel; whose whole character—from his almost infant sympathy with the wounded feelings, and family misfortunes of his aged benefactor, to his own pathetic farewell address to his ungrateful, but still beloved countrymen—breathes nothing throughout but tenderness and benevolence.

Of this we even see a *trait* in his compliance with Saul's abject intreaties that he would turn with him, to save appearances, before the elders of his

people. And though duty to a higher sovereign, forbade the aged prophet ever again to renew their personal intercourse; we read that he "mourned" in secret for the worse than death of the goodly youth, in whose exaltation (even at the expense of his own) he had been so disinterested an agent.

MARY. It shewed a very good heart, I am sure, and one is sorry that God seems displeased by it.

MAMA. Nay, Mary; the gentle rebuke, implied, rather than contained, in the beginning of our second chapter, hardly bears that construction; any more than the many similar ones addressed to good Moses in like occasions.

But did the one prophet, any more than the other, testify at first, the required alacrity in God's service?

MARY. No; Moses, you remember, made many excuses not to go to Pharaoh; and Samuel said if Saul heard of his going to anoint another king, he would kill him. How could he be so foolish?

MAMA. Just because he was a man, Mary, and not an angel; and to shew that the most tried servants of God—those who could confront, in his strength, at one time, the power of a Saul, or a *Pharaoh—could give* way, at others, to a

despondency and distrust, not altogether strangers to the more enlightened Christian's path.

But how wonderful and encouraging, in both instances we have quoted—is the long-suffering, and condescension to human infirmity, of the Almighty! Moses has miracle after miracle vouchsafed, to overcome his reluctance; and Samuel is permitted to cloak, under the vail of sacrifice, the sinful cowardice of a treacherous heart—thus, indeed, unconsciously furthering, by his own weakness, the probable designs of providence, in keeping secret for a time, the future elevation of a son of Jesse.

Of what town was this man an inhabitant?

MARY. Bethlehem, Mama! the very place where Christ was born!

MAMA. And does this surprise you, my dear? Of whom was his mother, a lineal descendant?

MARY. I might have known—of David.

MAMA. And do you remember how this birth of the Saviour of mankind, was, in fulfilment of ancient prophecy, brought to happen at Bethlehem, where his parents had never resided?

MARY. By his mother going to her own city to be taxed. . . . .

MAMA. Yes; in obedience to an edict of a *heathen emperor*, unique, as far as we know,

in the annals of his empire, and of which we should probably never have heard, but for its unconscious furtherance of the recorded designs of Heaven!

But to return to Samuel and his mission. What effect had it on the elders of Bethlehem?

MARY. They "trembled," and asked if he came "peaceably." What were they afraid of?

MAMA. Probably of rebuke for some transgression of which their consciences accused them, nor could the recent public reproof and rejection of Saul, have failed to invest with additional awe the character of God's chosen prophet. But he soon quieted these fears, and offered along with them that sacrifice, without which (though not so understood by them,) the inauguration of the future king would have been unhallowed and incomplete.

With a view to their particular share in it, Jesse and his sons were specially "called" and "sanctified;" being indeed, as we elsewhere learn, among the principal persons of the city. But were they *all* present on the solemn occasion?

MARY. Oh no! Mama. I used to be so delighted long ago, when I first heard the story—with Samuel fancying that all the handsome elder sons *must be God's* choice—and dear little

David all the while left with the sheep, and nobody so much as thinking of him!

MAMA. Nobody! Mary! He who "seeth not as man seeth," thought of him, and had marked him, even "from the sheepfold," for his own. Not for the beauty of his countenance,—though he too, like his brothers, was "goodly to look at,"—but because the Lord, who "looketh on the heart," discerned *there*, the fairer rudiments of faith and obedience, of piety and penitence. For these it was, that he said to his servant Samuel, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." And how wonderful is the consequence of this mystical act, and how great is henceforward the contrast, between the now rejected, and chosen future, king of Israel! Wherein did it consist?

MARY. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David, from that day forth,—and departed from Saul.

MAMA. And was this desertion of God's Spirit,—awful and desolating as it must have been, his only punishment?

MARY. Oh no! "An evil spirit troubled him;" but why is it said to be "from the Lord?"

MAMA. Because permitted at least, by the Almighty, to combine with his own remorse,

and ungoverned passions, judicially to vex and torment him, like the demoniacs we read of in Scripture.

But how singular was the providential arrangement which brought—at the unconscious suggestion of Saul's servants—to his court, the successor, whose presence there, and popularity with the people he was one day to rule over, were as desirable, as under ordinary circumstances, they would have been improbable.

For what purpose was David summoned from keeping his sheep, to be the unexpected inmate of a palace?

MARY. To play before Saul on the harp, and charm away his melancholy. I wonder how a shepherd boy should have become a famous musician, and be heard of so far.

MAMA. Music, in its simplest forms at least, is no unusual shepherd accomplishment. But from David's being styled, at this early period, "a mighty valiant man and prudent," as well as a comely person, we may trace in the lately obscure and forgotten stripling, the maturing energy of that Spirit of the Lord, to whose presence even Saul's servants ascribed such uncommon qualifications.

MARY. How strange too, that Saul should have taken a liking to the very person he would

have hated, had he known all! This must have been God's doing, as well as the effect of David's playing, in charming away the evil spirit.

MAMA. That the whole course of events which placed David under the immediate shadow of the throne he was hereafter to occupy, was overruled by God, is too manifest to escape any one. But music,—such especially, as the pious strains, with which we are sure the sweet psalmist of Israel must have soothed the unquiet and remorseful spirit of Saul, has a powerful tendency of itself to calm and tranquillize the soul; independently of the direct rebuke which the piety of David, "severe in youthful beauty," would convey to an actual spirit of evil, were such permitted really to visit and harass Saul.

Of his taste and proficiency, even thus early, in sacred poetry, we have an example in the 9th Psalm, supposed by many to be commemorative of the victory over Goliath. And Oh! Mary, when reading it, and the many other delightful productions of the same inspired pen, can we ever be sufficiently thankful, that the songs of Zion, which had power in those days, to banish the gloom, and refresh the troubled spirit of Saul, have descended through countless ages, *to cheer, and fortify,* and animate the Christian *of our own,—to* attend him as familiar friends,

through every step of his chequered pilgrimage —to lull his very cradle with their hallowed melodies—to form the first precious exercise of his infant lips, and memory—and gladden his dying ear in that dark valley, which they have so powerfully contributed to divest of its terrors.

MORNING THIRD.

LESSON.—1st Samuel, Chapter xvii.

MAMA. The peculiar energy and animation, my dear Mary, with which, (as I remember remarking in the case of your favourite Ruth) you have just read me the history of the first exploit of the youthful David, seems to spare me the trouble of pointing out its uncommonly interesting character. But the scene of it, so minutely here described, will be placed, perhaps, more vividly before your eyes, or your imagination, if we quote, in illustration of it, some remarks of a modern traveller of that valuable class, to whom we are of late years so deeply indebted, for making the localities of our sacred story familiar to the fireside of the humblest Christian reader.

He says:—"After some miles of hard journey over hills and rocks, we entered the famous valley, renowned for centuries, as the field of the *victory* gained by David over the uncircumcised *Philistine*. Nothing has occurred to alter the *face of the* country. The very 'brook,' whence

David chose the 'five small stones,' has been noticed by many a thirsty pilgrim, journeying from Jaffa to Jerusalem, all of whom must pass it in their way. The ruins of goodly edifices, attest, indeed, the religious veneration entertained in later periods, for the hallowed spot; but even these are now scarcely discernible; and nothing can be said to interrupt the native dignity of this memorable scene."

MARY. How I should like to see the very spot! Whereabouts shall I look for it on the map?

MAMA. The places named in the beginning of the chapter, as the site of the combat, lie between Jerusalem and Bethlehem; to the south of the former, and somewhat nearer to it, than to the latter; viz. a distance of from fifteen to twenty miles.

But was this memorable valley between "Shoah and Azekah," destined to be the scene of a general battle between the two great armies, which occupied the rival heights on either side?

MARY. No, no. The Philistines thought *one* of their men enough, to conquer the Israelites by; and sent him out to challenge any one of them to fight him; and whichever champion lost, *his nation was to* serve the other.

MAMA. Similar trials of strength in ancient

days were not uncommon; and sometimes humanely designed to save needless effusion of blood. But was the contest, in this case, an equal, or fair one?

MARY. Any thing but that! Goliath was a giant, more than six cubits high, and all covered with brazen armour.

MAMA. But unless we know the precise height to which six cubits and a half amount; or what proportion the weight of this huge and cumbrous armour, bore to the structure of the Philistine giant, we shall form a very imperfect estimate, either of the terrors of this gigantic champion, or the courage of David in encountering him.

MARY. Mama, I forget about a "cubit," though you once told me.

MAMA. It is the length of a man's arm, from the shoulder to the elbow; and thus measured, Goliath must have stood, nearly eleven feet high. Indeed, a less bulk could hardly have sufficed, to enable him to bear the enormous burden of his armour, which weighed, even by the standard of the smaller shekel, must have amounted to an hundred and fifty pounds; his spear's head alone, weighing from fifteen to twenty.

We need not wonder that such a Colossus, *thus provided* with defensive, as well as offensive armour, (for his very legs were shielded by

"greaves of brass,") should strike terror among the nearly unarmed multitudes of Israel; accustomed for years to tremble before the Philistines, and but recently emancipated from their galling yoke. Saul too, had lost, with God's favour and countenance, his youthful valour and daring; and day after day, did the blaspheming pagan insult with impunity, the name and people of Jehovah.

But by what train of circumstances, was David brought opportunely to the camp, to vindicate the honour of both?

MARY. I was rather going to ask, how he came to be away from it, and seemingly living at home with his father. I thought he was already at court, waiting on Saul.

MAMA. I am glad you have observed, and mentioned, what has puzzled older heads to account for satisfactorily.

Some have been induced, (especially by the apparent ignorance of David's person, displayed by Saul's questions about him, after the victory,) to make this part of his history precede in the order of time, his appointment as minstrel to the deceased monarch; while others again think the questions might simply apply, to the particular family and *parentage*, of the "stripling" now *rendered famous in Israel*.

hardly to be found in the Bible, than is contained in these few verses. And had the dispositions thus early indicated, remained uncorrupted by the evil influence of the world, the title of one "after God's own heart," might have adhered to David, unquestioned, through life.

Read me the words of this simplest and sweetest of heroic narratives.

MARY. "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them; seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

"David said, moreover, the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear; he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee."

MAMA. Yes, Mary; to faith and holy confidence such as this, human prudence itself would offer no further opposition. Nor could, let us *remember*, such pure and sublime sentiments *owe their* origin, save to that "Spirit of the

Lord" by which we already are aware, the soul of the young man was now fully possessed and inspired.

MARY. Then the Spirit of the Lord "resting" on David, means, I suppose, something very different from the way it used to "come" at times upon Samson?

MAMA. I am glad you have recollected and applied this; and discerned the distinction, between the infusion from on high, of pure spiritual principles, and holy motives, in the whole character (with a few sad exceptions) of David—and the mere conveyance of supernatural bodily strength and energy, for special purposes, to the generally faulty Samson.

But by what purely natural means did Saul design to compensate for the tender age, and inexperience in war, of David?

MARY. By lending him his own armour: but the lad had never been used to it, and felt it would only be an encumbrance. I can well understand this, Mama, for I tried to lift a coat of mail in a museum once, and I could not so much as move it with both hands.

MAMA. Imagine, then, what practice would be necessary to wear a whole suit of such *ponderous materials*. But with what weapons, more

adapted to his age and calling, did the shepherd champion of Israel provide himself?

MARY. "Five smooth stones out of the brook," and a bag, and his sling and staff. No wonder, Mama, that the proud Philistine was affronted, and asked if he came out against him as a dog.

MAMA. Or that he, who saw only "as man seeth," disdained the fair ruddy countenance, and simple shepherd-bearing of the Lord's anointed! But was he satisfied with bare contempt and scorn?

MARY. No; he "cursed David by his gods," and said he would "give his flesh to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field."

MAMA. And did David, as youthful rashness might have dictated, return "cursing for cursing," and "railing for railing?"

MARY. No, indeed! his answer is both mild and awful. "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."

MAMA. Ay, Mary, and while he retorts in the name of that God, the insolent threats of the *enemy and blas*phemer—mark the noble pervad*ing motive* which, on this and a thousand subse-

quent occasions, animated the courage of this lion-hearted servant of Jehovah, viz. "that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel," and that "he saveth not with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

Bear this in mind, my dear, as that grand leading principle, by which the extent of God's reciprocal favour for his faithful servant, is, even to our finite understanding, fully justified.

MARY. It does one's heart good to hear so young a person speak so beautifully, as well as boldly. No wonder his hand was steady, and his aim good, and the stone sent right into the giant's forehead! It must have been hard work to draw out the huge monster's sword, and cut off his head with it? Why did David do this?

MAMA. In compliance with universal custom, and to bear the trophy to the feet of Saul. The valuable armour which the same custom made the property of the conqueror, was afterwards piously dedicated, along with the sword, by David in the tabernacle of the Lord; thus giving the honour of the victory to whom all honour was due, and proving that the expressions by which it was ushered in, viz. "the battle is the Lord's," were *not, as is too often* the case in similar re-

ferences by earthly conquerors, mere lip homage, and words of course.

We have commented so fully, as we went along, on this pleasing and well known part of Scripture, that we have only to draw from it the personal and practical encouragement it affords, for strenuous resistance, in the strength of our God, of our spiritual enemies. For it were to insult that Lord, whom David delighted to honour, to imagine, that he who restrained before his youthful anointed, the ferocity of the wild beasts of the desert—and made a pebble in the hands of a boy, the instrument of discomfiture against a mail-clad giant—will fail, in the hour of need, to fight on the side of those who display in his service, the humility, the zeal, and, above all, the fervent piety, and deep sense of religion, of David.

MORNING FOURTH.

LESSON.—1st Samuel, Chapters xviii. and xix.

MARY. Mama, I am quite at a loss now, which to love best, David or his friend. I almost think Jonathan is most to be admired, because it would have been so natural for Saul's son to hate and envy David, especially when the women praised him in their songs above his own father; instead of which, he preferred him to his very self!

MAMA. I should indeed have been disappointed, my dear child, had this disinterestedness of attachment, so peculiarly attractive to youth, failed to secure your esteem for Jonathan; and I anticipate much pleasure, as well as instruction, from our following up together the progress of a friendship so honourable to both parties, as well as to our common nature. How early did it commence?

MARY. At once, Mama. There is not a word said here about their knowing each other before; *but no sooner had* David done speaking to Saul, *than* "*Jonathan loved* him as his own soul."

MAMA. And well does an affection, so nobly founded, deserve to be traced to higher motives than mere caprice or fancy! On what subject was the conference between Saul and David, by which the favour of Jonathan was so instantaneously won?

MARY. About the victory over the giant, I suppose; they could be talking of nothing else.

MAMA. And what qualities, far beyond mere animal bravery, or even mental heroism, did David's former speech to Saul, on the same occasion, manifest?

MARY. A delightful mixture, Mama, of modesty, as a lad—and yet boldness to fight because God would be with him—and concern for God's honour—and feeling for his poor countrymen—and a great deal more besides.

MAMA. And can we wonder that qualities so rare in themselves, and still more rarely united—should command the esteem of a thoroughly kindred mind? or that, combined with the happiest personal gifts in one of congenial age and disposition—they should ripen quickly into indissoluble attachment? How was the reality of this affection first proved?

MARY. By Jonathan "making a covenant *with David,*" and stripping off his very "robe," *and* "*sword,*" and "girdle," to give him.

MAMA. Are you aware that by all these actions, more than simple good-will was intended, and demonstrated? In the east, the bestowal of a royal "robe," or pelisse, on an inferior, is, to this day, one of the highest marks of distinction. Do you happen to recollect any instance in which an individual, suddenly raised from the depths of peril and obscurity, was similarly invested?

MARY. Let me think, Mama! I don't know if a "robe" is mentioned, but Joseph had fine clothes put on him by Pharaoh, and a ring off the king's own finger.

MAMA. Well remembered. But I was thinking of "Mordecai, the Jew," who—as the "man whom the king delighted to honour,"—was led through the city, arrayed in the royal robes, and mounted on the king's own charger.

An exchange of "girdles" has ever been, in those countries, a token of unbounded confidence; and to none but a braver (at least in his own estimation) than himself, would a warrior of antiquity have presented his sword, or bow.

But did David justify the high, and almost romantic estimate formed of him by his princely comrade?

MARY. Yes. He "behaved himself wisely, *and was accepted in the sight of all the people, and of Saul's servants also.*"

MAMA. In the latter part of this praise, Mary, we have an almost certain confirmation of its earlier portion. For "wisely" indeed must that obscure youth have "behaved himself," who could, at the age of two-and-twenty, have sustained undazzled, the exaltation of being "set over" the valiant warriors of Saul; and at the same time secured their esteem, and that of the nation at large?

In what rather invidious manner was this esteem manifested?

MARY. The women came "out of all the cities of Israel," singing, to meet Saul; but all the time praising David ten times more highly.

MAMA. A circumstance too likely to aggravate and embitter the already envious feelings of Saul towards his youthful protégé. But did the women of Israel, in thus celebrating the triumph of their monarch, and his young lieutenant, over the natural enemies of their country, violate (as we should now feel to be the case) the customs or decorum of their sex?

MARY. I suppose not, Mama; for Miriam, you know, did the same, after the Red Sea; and Deborah composed a famous hymn about the battle with Sisera.

MAMA. Right; and with such examples, the conduct of the "daughters of Israel" was fully

warranted. But in what light did it appear to Saul?

MARY. He was "very wroth, and the saying displeased him," and he said, "what can he have more, but the kingdom?"

MAMA. Ay, Mary, in the fear of being supplanted in *it*, lay the secret motive of all Saul's unhallowed jealousies and apprehensions! And whence had these their birth, but in that desolating sense of abandonment by God, which his own stubborn disobedience had provoked? Well may our great poet say, that "conscience doth make cowards of us all!" for what are the words of inspiration to the same effect, regarding Saul?

MARY. "Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul."

MAMA. And under the influence of these "terrors from the Lord," the unhappy monarch was driven to forego the soothing effects of David's minstrelsy; and place him in an office of trust at a distance from his person.

What reason have we to think this arrangement a providential one for David?

MARY. Because, Mama, Saul must have grown madder and wickeder than ever; for he actually *tried to kill* David with a javelin, while *he was playing to* do him good.

MAMA. If you had reversed your remark, and said, "wickeder and madder," you would have come nearer the truth. For, observe, this accession of the judicial frenzy of Saul came on him, just after his heart became possessed with enhanced envy and evil passions against the innocent David.

MARY. But how came he to "prophesy," in such a sad unholy state of mind? What can the word mean here?

MAMA. Some think the word should be translated (as the original admits) so as to express the "howlings" of ungoverned frenzy; others, who interpret it literally, suppose the "prophecy" to have consisted (like the extorted testimony of the demoniacs in the New Testament) in involuntary predictions of the exaltation of his rival. Be this as it may, the "reprobate mind" to which he was now "given up," was not long in suggesting a frightfully treacherous device, for getting rid of his supposed enemy, under the mask of honour and friendship.

What reward had been promised to him who should deliver Israel from the Philistine champion?

MARY. "The king's daughter in marriage." *But Saul never* thought of fulfilling it, till it oc-

curred to him it might perhaps be the means of getting David killed in battle.

MAMA. And did David fall lightly into the "snare" so cruelly laid for him?

MARY. No; he does not seem at all anxious to be the king's son-in-law; and twice declined the honour. Indeed, the first time, Saul could not be serious in it, for he gave Merab away soon after to another person.

MAMA. And, after such a gross affront—when the partiality of the king's second daughter for David, induced her father to repeat the treacherous offer of *her* hand—was it idle ambition that moved him at length, with much modest reluctance, to accept it?

MARY. No, Mama; it was his bravery, and love of fighting with God's enemies. For whenever he was told his marrying Michal depended on his killing a hundred Philistines, "it pleased him well to be the king's son-in-law;" though all the time Saul only intended to get him killed by them.

MAMA. And was such the result of his cruel and cowardly project, to murder his benefactor, and make a widow in heart of his favourite child?

MARY. Oh! no. David killed double the number of Philistines, and then Saul was ashamed

not to "give him his daughter to wife." But instead of being glad, he seemed to grudge that she should love him.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, even the happiness of his child, with an estimable husband, had become a source of disquiet to one, who was now, in spite of this near relationship, "his enemy continually."

But did any indiscretion on David's part lend a shadow of motive to this unnatural hostility?

MARY. Not one. He "behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by."

MAMA. Oh! Mary; what an humbling commentary on these words of deserved encomium, is supplied by the opening verse of the very next chapter, "Saul spake to Jonathan, and all his servants, that they should kill David!"

Does this remind you of a still more hateful and groundless persecution of a greater than David—merely because he did "all things well," and "grew in favour with God and man?"

MARY. Oh, yes. The scribes and pharisees were like wicked Saul—mad with rage and envy—always laying snares to catch Christ—and "taking counsel together how they might kill him." But our Lord had no friend like Jonathan to give him warning of their plans.

MAMA. You forget that the same Divine in-

terposition so often exerted to extricate David from present danger, for future sovereignty—was expressly and mercifully withheld, to promote the sacrifice of Christ. "Think you," (had it been otherwise,) His "Father could not have sent twelve legions of angels" for his rescue, instead of a frail human instrument?

But how was that of David, from the "snares of the fowler," (as he himself pathetically calls them,) effected?

MARY. Good Jonathan first warned him to keep out of harm's way—and then spoke boldly and beautifully for him to his father.

MAMA. Beautifully indeed! and not the less boldly, that the discretion which ever accompanies true courage, induced him to confine his defence, exactly to those points which might soften, without irritating Saul. Had he urged, for instance, that David always "behaved himself wisely," and was in consequence, the darling of Israel,—would he have acted the part of a judicious, as well as sincere friend?

MARY. No. Saul's jealous mind would have taken fire, and he would have hated him more. But now he "hearkened to the voice of Jonathan, and swore 'as the Lord liveth,' he shall not be slain."

MAMA. And what a victory,—a bloodless

but glorious triumph was this for a son to achieve, —by his own justice and moderation, over the heart of a cruel parent, and in behalf of a more than brother! Who would not envy his feelings, as he once more beheld the two objects dearest to him, brought together, as in times past, by his powerful mediation?

But was this happy state of things of long duration?

MARY. No, no! David gained another great battle; and directly Saul's "evil spirit" came upon him. It must surely have been the devil himself, Mama; for we never hear of it, except just when he gets envious of David, and then it immediately makes Saul try to kill him.

MAMA. All characteristic *traits* no doubt, of him, who we know is a "murderer from the beginning;" and to whose machinations Saul's mind was laid sadly open, by the declared departure of the Holy Spirit. Be this as it may, to what domestic guardian (placed about him, we may remark, by his very foe himself) was David indebted, under Providence, for safety?

MARY. When Saul sent after him to his own daughter's house, to watch for and murder him, —she let him down by a window; and dressed *up an image in the bed*, and said he was sick.

MAMA. And did the account of his son-in-

law's illness, at all disarm or mollify the rage of his cruel father?

MARY. No; he sent for him, bed and all, that he might slay him; and when he found out the trick, was angry with his very wife for saving him.

MAMA. Truly might David say, in the affecting 59th Psalm, composed in this imminent peril,—

"Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men.

"For, lo! they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord.

"They run and prepare themselves without my fault; awake to help me, and behold."

Nor could any simile more appropriately convey the idea of the relentless ferocity with which his dwelling was beset by the emissaries of Saul, than that of a pack of hungry and howling dogs, disappointed of their destined prey.

"They return at evening—they make a noise like a dog—and go round about the city.

"Let them wander up and down for meat—and grudge if they be not satisfied.

"But I will sing aloud of thy power—yea, I *will sing aloud of* thy mercy in the morning."

With whom did David take refuge, or, as he

elsewhere expresses it,—" flee as a bird unto the mountain ?"

MARY. With old Samuel at Ramah.—One might have thought Saul would have had respect for him.

MAMA. Especially, as still farther to ensure the safety of David, the aged prophet went down and lived with him at Naioth, within the hallowed precincts of the college, or school of the prophets.

What befel the sacrilegious messengers, sent by Saul to invade this sanctuary ?

MARY. When they saw the company of the prophets, and Samuel at their head, they fell a prophesying too. Does this mean foretelling what was to come, or in giving praises to God ?

MAMA. The latter, in all probability; as this was the stated employment of numbers of holy persons, who never pretended to the strictly prophetic office. But if the inspired songs in which the messengers joined, were expressive, as is likely, of the faith and trust of David, in his Almighty deliverer, the extorted homage of those who involuntarily echoed them, would be the more evidently miraculous; especially in the case of the infuriated monarch himself, who went down, (enraged at the ill success of his mission) *to* wreak his own vengeance on David.

What a contrast must have been afforded, between his quickly stifled imprecations, and those holier strains of praise, which (from such "unblest lips,") came so strangely and fearfully on the ear of his hearers, as to give rise to the proverbial expression of surprise,—"Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Does this remind you of any namesake of his, who, bent on an exterminating mission, and "breathing out threatenings and slaughter," was suddenly transformed, by a gracious remonstrance from on High, into an inspired follower of the meek and lowly Jesus?

MARY. You must mean the apostle Paul,—though he was never so wicked as Saul, for he thought he was doing right all the time, when he persecuted the Christians.

MAMA. True; but it was the spirit of persecution originally in him, (however directed) to which I alluded,—and the complete subjugation of which, by the power of Christian principle, was a miracle, transcending far the brief transformation, from a blasphemer to a prophet, of the impenitent king of Israel.

For it is his continued impenitence, Mary, that supplies, (instead of a continuation of the parallel,) a final and deplorable contrast, between the fate of Saul of Gibeah, and Saul of Tarsus.

Had the former, (like the latter,) "not disobedient unto the heavenly vision," improved to its possible gracious end, the miraculous interference of the often quenched Spirit of God, in his destructive purpose—and become, under its hallowed influence, reconciled in sincerity to David—what a store of temporal peace, at least, if not of prosperity, might have been laid up for his declining years; in the filial love of the best of sons, co-operating with the fidelity of the bravest of sons-in-law, for the protection of his throne, and stability of his kingdom! Instead of a baffled murderer, he might have remained to the day of his death, a mighty and honoured monarch. And his death, instead of being self-inflicted, at the suggestion of despair—and a fit termination, for a life of malicious ungodliness—might have been as peaceful, as the forbearance of that long-suffering God—who granted earthly tranquillity, as the meed of the tardy penitence of an Ahab—could make it.

Let us remember the question of Saul of Tarsus, himself; "*Who* made" those "to differ," so widely in their end, who in some features of natural character, so strongly resembled each other? And let us ever pray, that we may never *provoke God to withdraw* his Holy Spirit from us;

and by so doing, choose our own portion with the unreclaimed and impenitent monarch of Israel.

MORNING FIFTH.

LESSON—1st Samuel, Chapters xx. and xxi.

MARY Mama! was it not a little rash and foolish in David, to come back from Naioth, where he was safe with good Samuel, and put himself again in the power of Saul?

MAMA. And does not your wonder at his taking so natural a step, my dear, betray a little haste, and want of consideration on your part, both of David's situation and character? Not to mention the irksomeness of being a fugitive, and an exile, to every man of common feeling and patriotism, David had left behind him, at the court of Saul, a faithful wife, and an honourable employment. There lay the scene of his domestic enjoyments, and public duties; and wherever these centre, there will the heart of the truly "excellent of the earth," ever fondly turn, at the hazard of suffering, of danger, nay even of death itself.

But you forget the firm faith, and unswerving *trust of David,* (which a residence under the roof *of holy Samuel,* could scarcely have failed to

strengthen) so beautifully expressed in the 11th Psalm, supposed to have been composed, when first advised to provide for his safety by flight.

"In the Lord put I my trust; how say ye to my soul, 'Flee as a bird to your mountain?'"

Descriptive indeed, of the treachery of Saul, are the words:

"For lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may *privily shoot* at the upright in heart."

But what is the holy influence that, amid such perils, sustains and reassures David?

"The Lord's throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth."

With such a persuasion as this, for the prevailing habit of his soul, you will no longer wonder, I am sure, that David should return to his home and duty; especially with the additional human motive, supplied to him by the powerful countenance of Jonathan.

MARY. No, Mama; and I am not surprised that Jonathan was too good himself to believe that Saul would kill David, after his oath. But David seems to have known his enemy better.

MAMA. *Yes, Mary;* by bitter experience of *his repeated machinations!* Did even Jonathan.

after his friend's expressed conviction of them, advise him at once to shew himself to Saul?

MARY. No; he agreed, like a true friend, to do for David, "all that his soul desired," and find out if he could appear safely. But why should he have "sat at meat" with the king, at the "new moon?"

MAMA. Because a solemn feast, accompanied by a sacrifice, was appointed to take place on every such occasion; and of course Saul, (who had not left off the outward semblance of religion) would expect his household to be present. Are you aware, that the months of the Jews (by which all their festivals were regulated) did not begin, like ours, on the same particular day every year; but on the first appearance of the new moon itself, which persons stationed for the purpose, on the tops of hills, proclaimed by the sound of a horn, to all the country?

MARY. Ah! this explains something about "blowing the trumpet for the new moon," which I remember I did not understand when I met with it. How pleasant it is, Mama, to know by degrees, what every word in the Bible signifies!

MAMA. And how pleasanter far, Mary, as well as more profitable, to be learning to apply,—as I trust you begin to do—the little, the meaning of which is become clear to you, to the purposes for

which all "Holy Scripture is given," of "reproof, of doctrine, of correction, and instruction in righteousness!" Even the mention of abolished ritual observances,—such as the Jewish "new moons,"—may thus be made to remind us of the radical defects in sacredness and sincerity, by which they were at length converted into an abomination, in the sight of Him who ordained them.

But what test was the solemnity of the "new moon," to furnish of David's safety from Saul?

MARY. Jonathan was to let him know whether the king enquired for him roughly, or kindly. But it was a pity David should bid him say, he was "gone to Bethlehem," if the king missed him,—unless he really went.

MAMA. Let us hope that he did so Mary, as a natural visit to his father's family, on returning from exile, and one quite easy of accomplishment within the three days which elapsed, before his friend and he again met. And how inconsistent with the utterance, or even implication of falsehood, is the manly confidence in his integrity, with which he expresses his readiness, if really guilty of aught against his sovereign, to fall by the hand of his princely brother in arms!

MARY. How beautiful it is, Mama, to see Jonathan take David out into the fields, where

none heard but God, and call God to witness his kind intentions toward him!

MAMA. And how much more admirable still, the heroic submission to the Divine decree, and unparalleled disinterestedness of personal friendship, which could lead the heir-apparent to the throne of Israel,—without one murmur against God, or trace of jealousy of his innocent rival,—not only to pledge his own soul to continued good offices towards him; but to condescend to invoke in return, the future good-will and protection of the shepherd boy, to whom God had seen meet to hand over his hereditary sceptre! In vain would you search, my dear child, in all your ancient histories, for a state of mind so superior to the common weakness of humanity; and to what, save the knowledge and fear of the true God, can we attribute this unquestioned superiority in magnanimity, of an obscure Jewish prince, over the greatest heroes of pagan antiquity?

MARY. Oh! there are none of them to be compared with Jonathan. They never dreamed of making *friends* of those who were to reign instead of them.

MAMA. Nay, Mary; the very possibility of persons 'reigning' not 'instead,' but after them, affords a criminal pretext to many an eastern

monarch, (even among those who profess to worship the one true God) for depriving of eye-sight, and frequently of life, their own nearest relations; and so it was unquestionably in Jonathan's power to have acted at this moment towards David, instead of counting his safety more precious to him than his own.

To what, besides native greatness of soul, and the power of religion, are we to ascribe this rare preference?

MARY. To Jonathan "loving David as his own soul?" I hope David loved him again, as he deserved!

MAMA. That we shall have full occasion to praise, both from his grief at the death of his friend, and his well-earned kindness to that friend's helpless offspring.

But by what expedient was Jonathan, without suspicion, or danger to either, and without a personal interview, to apprize David of the result of the banquet at the "new moon?"

MARY. By shooting three arrows, near where David should be hid; and according as he should say to the lad with him, "the arrows are on this side," or "beyond thee," David would know it was safe to stay or go. He might almost have guessed beforehand (as I did) how Saul would behave. But what did he mean by thinking,

the first day he missed David, that he might be "unclean."

MAMA. You were aware, I thought, that certain legal defilements,—for instance, touching a dead body, or attending a funeral, disqualified the Israelities for partaking in religious "solemn assemblies," by which name, "new moons" you know, are called in Scripture.

MARY. But how could Saul wonder at all, at David's absence? Did he think he would come, and have a spear thrown at him again?

MAMA. He might be excused for thinking so, as the thing had already happened twice; and David's forgiving disposition could not be unknown to him. But let us mark the bitterness and contempt, displayed even in the disparaging epithet, of "son of Jesse," by which he designates his own son-in-law,—suggested perhaps, by that excuse of the recent family festival at Bethlehem, which, whether true or fictitious, would have proved equally unavailing with Saul—whose rage, at what he conceives his son's blind infatuation, now for the first time, betrays its secret motive, in the knowledge of David's future sovereignty over Israel.

That the narrow and selfish spirit of Saul, should be incapable of comprehending or appreciating, the generosity of his son, is only what

might be expected. But in his unnatural effort to murder that son, instead of his intended victim,—we see the blind ferocity of a soul, emancipated from Divine restraints, in the most awful and humiliating light. Twice has this unoffending, nay, praiseworthy son, nearly fallen by his parent's rash hand; once for bravely defending, and now for yet more honourably abdicating, his father's forfeited kingdom.

MARY. Well might Jonathan know, that when Saul had tried even to kill *him*, it must be all over with David; and no wonder he was angry, and left the table directly.

MAMA. True; but have you observed for whom the grief was experienced, which embittered to this noble youth, the royal banquet, and turned its viands into gall? Was it for his own narrow escape from death, or the opprobrious epithets lavished on him by his father?

MARY. No; "he was grieved for David," and the shame done to *him* by Saul. Of course he lost no time in shooting the arrows far enough, to let him know all was at an end. But after all, David and he did meet, and speak together.

MAMA. So it happened, though the great uncertainty and danger, attendant on such an interview, rendered it prudent to have concerted other means of communication. But oh! Mary, what

reason have we to be glad, that the affecting meeting was permitted to take place; as it affords perhaps, the most delightful picture of mutual affection and fidelity, which the annals of the world can supply!

I see you feel it, as all must do; and I trust you are capable of appreciating and admiring the exquisite simplicity (unequalled save in holy writ) with which the heart-rending parting scene is narrated—the deep and repeated reverence of David's gesture, called forth, not by a difference of rank, which each had long since forgotten—but the spontaneous homage of one generous soul to the kindred greatness of another; and the transition from this, to the fond endearments of a friendship, truly said, to "surpass the love of woman" —and the weeping of those who felt (like the apostle and his converts) that they might "see each other's face no more"—and the solemn benediction, and consignment, to the protection of Jehovah, of him who was about to go forth, not knowing (like his great descendant) where to "lay his head!"

On these, my dear child, it is needless, worse than needless to enlarge. The simple words of the sacred historian make us see, nay, feel it all; and those who never felt disposed to weep with David at the feet of Jonathan, and Joseph

on the neck of his brethren, and Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus, may safely defy the power of language to wake emotions of tenderness in their stony bosoms.

But while we rejoice in the possession of more human sympathies—let us not be content with admiring, and loving, nay, feeling for David and Jonathan. Let us endeavour to regulate our human friendships by so bright and engaging an example; selecting our favourite associates among the chosen children of God,—for conformity to his will, and devotion to his service,—viewing with holy emulation, rather than envy, their superior advantages of nature or of grace—adhering to them faithfully, through good and evil fortune—and consigning them, when torn from us, to the keeping of him "whose favour is life," and to that "friend who sticketh closer than a brother."

Were Christian friendships thus solidly founded, and faithfully conducted—we should hear less of broken ties, and disappointed expectations; and after cheering each others' path through life with a continued interchange of "sweet counsel"—denied, alas! to David and Jonathan—those who, like them, had been "lovely in their lives," would even in "death" be for ever "undivided."

But we must follow the future king of Israel's wanderings through the land, one day to be his own.

To whose protection did he now betake himself?

MARY. Last time he went to Samuel, and still he seems to have preferred good men; for he came to Nob, to Ahimelech the high priest. Mama! I thought the high priest lived always at Jerusalem, where the ark was.

MAMA. You must have thought less than usual, my dear, and little to the purpose, since you could forget that Jerusalem continued a city of the heathen Jebusites, till conquered long after by David; and since the late migrations and present fate of the ark of God, could have escaped your memory.

MARY. Oh! I ought to have remembered about the ark being sent back from the Philistines' country, in a cart drawn by two milch cows; who found the way into Judea of themselves. But I quite forget at what place it remained till now.

MAMA. At Kirjath-jearim, whither it was removed, after the judgment which fell on the men of Bethshemesh, for profaning its sanctity. Here it remained forty-six years; till brought up in triumph by David, as we shall hereafter see.

But why not earlier transferred from its obscure exile to the wonted shelter of the tabernacle, we have no means of ascertaining. This only we know, that Nob, the city at which Ahimelech was officiating, was one set apart for the residence of the priests, and as such, in some degree sacred. There is something extremely puzzling, and (as far as I know) hitherto unexplained, in the circumstance of "shew-bread" being daily consecrated and offered, in the absence of that "ark of the testimony," and "mercy seat," before which it had been originally ordained to stand. That it was so, we learn, however, from our chapter.

What were the first emotions of Ahimelech, on seeing David?

MARY. He was afraid, when he saw him "alone"—why so?

MAMA. Because, as the trusted commander of a large body of men, it was unusual for him to be so meanly attended; though (having, as we see, "young men" with him,) he could not be literally "alone." You are shocked, I am sure, at the falsehood by which David attempts to account for the scanty number of his followers, and represents himself as still in the employment of Saul. The only palliation of which it admits, is the evident desire of David, not so much to

MORNING SIXTH.

LESSON—1st Samuel, Chapters xxii and xxiii.

MAMA. I think it will assist us in rightly estimating the greatness of the escape which David lately made from the enraged townsmen of Goliath—and his own deep sense of it—if we turn to the 34th Psalm, in which, while in comparative safety in the cave of Adullam, he poured forth his gratitude to his almighty defender.

How does this beautiful hymn of praise commence?

MARY. "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth."

MAMA. Yes; and observe how he urges to unite in his thanksgivings, those companions in affliction, whom relationship by blood, or similarity of condition, had driven to join him in his exile.

"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

And how beautifully does he encourage them

to depend for protection and sustenance on the same omnipotent hand!

"O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

"The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but those that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." And, lastly,

"The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

Indeed, the whole Psalm might be quoted as one noble effusion of pious confidence, and overflowing gratitude; and cannot be read (especially when viewed in connection with the affecting circumstances under which it was written,) without corresponding emotion.

What little band of fugitives in the desert was it specially designed to cheer and animate?

MARY. His "brethren, and all his father's house" had come to him; I suppose they feared Saul would kill them next. But it was a pity, I think, Mama, that "discontented" people, (as well as those in "debt" and "distress,") should join one who was of so different a temper.

MAMA. Perhaps the marginal translation, viz. "bitter of soul," will better express the legitimate workings of a "wounded spirit," which might cause those to abandon home and

country, who (like David) were strangers to the mean vice of discontent. He has been charged with setting up, for fraudulent debtors, and political malcontents, a standard of rebellion against Saul; an accusation which his own conduct, even when that bitterest of enemies was actually in his power—utterly belies. That one, himself unjustly proscribed and exiled, should open his arms and asylum to similar sufferers, was only natural. But his four hundred associates, so far from being of advantage for enabling him (had he been so disposed) to engage in any treasonable enterprize—seem by their inefficient numbers, to have been incompatible with his personal safety. The cave, and its desert vicinity, must soon have ceased to afford subsistence for so large a company; and we find it dispersed accordingly,—first by David soliciting a refuge for his parents with the king of Moab; and then (on private warning from the prophet Gad) seeking an asylum for himself with his kinsmen of the tribe of Judah.

MARY. Mama! why did he not take his parents there; rather than to the heathen king of Moab?

MAMA. In the first place, Mary, such frequent removals, from a desert cave, to a distant forest, as the perilous condition of David obliged him to make, at a moment's warning—must have

been very unsuitable to the advanced age of a father and mother, whose youngest by far of seven sons, had attained to the age of 25. And, in addition to the probability held out by the king of Moab's variance with Saul, that he would afford protection to outlaws from his kingdom,—careful searchers of Scripture have discovered a special tie, between the nation thus applied to, and the family of David. Can you discover any?

MARY. Let me think a little. Did you not once tell me Ruth the Moabitess, was great-grandmother to David? I suppose that is what you mean.

MAMA. Exactly. Obed, the father of Jesse, was Ruth's son. And if, as the Jews assert, she was allied to the royal family of Moab, there were persons still living, by whom the connexion might have been remembered. That it was acknowledged, so far as the desired protection went—we learn from our chapter; and the safety of his aged parents (a consequence, you will observe, of the dutifulness towards *her's* of Ruth) must have greatly lightened the anxieties of David.

MARY. How curious this is, Mama; and how much obliged we are to the people who find it all out for us! I never should have dreamed of

Ruth's having anything to do with David's parents.

MAMA. And whose fault would this have been, my dear; since you read, and talked over, and that lately—her precise relationship to him? But the task of patient research by which such severed links of sacred history are connected for our benefit, is indeed a praiseworthy one; tending to make what is in itself so useful—attractive and entertaining also.

MARY. I think we must apply to it again, to clear up the next verse, Mama; for the chapter says, Saul was both living in "Gibeah" and "under a tree at Ramah;" and you know Ramah, was where Samuel lived, a good way off.

MAMA. I am glad you observed this seeming discrepancy; and glad, also, that I can remove it, with the aid alone of that invaluable commentary which the marginal reading of our Bible affords. The word "Ramah" means, it seems, a "grove in a high place," and thus it ought to be understood here; and not as signifying a town of that name,—the *one* of which (for there were two) distinguished as the birth-place of Samuel, and since called Arimathea,—being at a considerable distance from Gibeah, and in the territory of Ephraim.

To what tribe of his own immediate kindred,

does Saul, from his elevated position, address his indignant complaints against his supposed enemies?

MARY. He says, "Hear now ye Benjamites!" and he calls David thrice over, the "son of Jesse," to shew his contempt for him,—and accuses them, (Jonathan and all) of conspiring against him. One can hardly help pitying poor old Saul, when he says, no one is "sorry for him."

MAMA. But was there the least shadow either of truth or probability in his allegations, that his servants, nay, his own son, had leagued against him, with a stranger of another tribe,—and that Jonathan had "stirred up David," and David "lain in wait" for him? Or were they not altogether the suggestions of the evil spirit by whom he was judicially tormented, or of his own yet more malignant temper?

MARY. Oh! yes; but that very thing makes one pity him more—he must have been so very unhappy!

MAMA. Not more unhappy than he deserved; as we shall presently see. But who was found, to minister by his ready falsehood, to the evil passions of his misguided master?

MARY. That wretch "Doeg the Edomite;"

and he told all about good Ahimelech giving David victuals and a sword in his distress.

MAMA. So far he told truth, though not *all* the truth; for he concealed the good priest's ignorance of David's disgrace with Saul. But in adding, that he "inquired of the Lord for him," (or in other words, sanctioned his supposed revolt,) he told a base lie; which involved in destruction an innocent man, and his whole connexions. Had Saul indeed not been bereft by frantic prejudice, of all power of discrimination between truth and falsehood,—how conclusive of innocence would have seemed to him the calm astonishment of the venerable man, that displeasure should have attended his honorable entertainment of the king's distinguished son-in-law! That such a solemn disclaimer by God's high priest, not only of evil intentions himself,—but suspicion of aught amiss in the character or conduct of David,—should have only provoked the murder of himself and family,—proves, that to the blind ferocity of a merciless tyrant, Saul now added open contempt for the altar of the Most High.

MARY. Mama! his soldiers were less wicked than their master; for they durst not "put forth their hand to kill the priests of the Lord." But Doeg fell upon them at once; and slew "eighty-five persons that wore a linen ephod."

MAMA. Yes; thus supporting, by reckless and unhesitating cruelty, the slanders to which his malice had given birth. So true is it, that "sin" (even in a temporal and restricted sense) "when it hath conceived, bringeth forth death."

But, Mary, while deploring this dreadful and unmerited catastrophe, which involved in one common ruin, the "men and women, children and sucklings,"—nay, unconscious animals of the city of Nob,—has any light been thrown by it, on the mysterious counsels of God?

MARY. Yes, Mama. I could not help thinking of Saul's sparing the Amalekites, and now, coolly butchering so many innocent people. Well might God, who knew it all beforehand,—be doubly angry with his pretences to humanity!

MAMA. I am glad you were struck with this fresh inconsistency between Saul's false lenity, and real thirst for blood. But the fact to which I wish to call your attention, is the unconscious fulfilment, by a tyrant and blasphemer, of one of the most striking predictions in Holy Writ.

Do you know from whom Ahimelech, and the whole wretched people involved in his ruin, were descended?

MARY. No, Mama.

MAMA. To whom (as we read of late) was it foretold, by the innocent lips of a child, that God

had decreed the destruction of his whole posterity?

MARY. Oh! you mean poor old Eli! and these priests, I suppose, were his descendants. How wonderful, that Saul, without knowing it, should be doing God's work! They did not all die, however,—one escaped to David.

MAMA. Yes; and how truly did this fugitive scion of a lately flourishing stock—realize the precise words of the prediction, that any who survived of the sons of Eli, *should petition to be put into a priest's office for a "piece of bread,"*— when he, in whom the whole honours and dignity of the order now centered—was fain to secure a harassed and toilsome existence, by joining a persecuted exile in the desert, far from the tabernacle and altar, which furnished his appointed means of subsistence. Nay, there is, I find, (on turning to the prophecy,) a still more curious specialty in its wording, viz. "*he* that is left of thine house," (indicating the survivor to be *one* only,) "*shall come and crouch to mine Anointed;*" by which an eye witness could not have more accurately described the fleeing of Abiathar, to take refuge with David.

That on hearing of the massacre, David should at once have ascribed it to the well-known treachery of Doeg—will less surprize us, if we turn to

the picture of his character in the 52d Psalm; (drawn apparently before the consummation of his meditated villainy,) where we find him thus apostrophized.

"Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?

"Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

"Thou lovest evil more than good, and lying rather than to speak righteousness.

"Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou false tongue."

To which David prophetically adds,

"God shall likewise destroy thee for ever; he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place; and out of the land of the living."

But, Mary, we have left unnoticed one remarkable feature in this horrible transaction, viz. that by the escape of Abiathar to David, with the Ephod, or priestly garment, (in which we know to have been included the oracular breast-plate, containing the "Urim and Thummim,") the visible departure of God from Saul, was, by his own act, for ever consummated; and that very power of "inquiring of the Lord," or securing the priestly sanction to his enterprizes—the supposed exercise of which by David had so incensed Saul—was daily put within his reach. And oh!

bitterest foe, "strengthening his hand in God," looking forward with a calm hope, (which, alas! he did not live to realize) of seeing his friend on the throne of Israel, and himself content to occupy a secondary station,—and ratifying in this full conviction, their former "covenant before the Lord." Well may we challenge all antiquity for a parallel picture, either of friendship or disinterestedness! Nor is it undesignedly said, in the beautiful simplicity of Scripture, that "David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house." Jonathan was too good a son, and too loyal a subject, to offend, by open countenance of David, even his father's groundless prejudices; in which, however, by living apart from the court, he abstained from seeming participation.

One is at a loss at times, which most to admire,—the generous friendship, or consummate prudence, of this perhaps most perfect of Scripture characters!

MARY. The "Ziphites" seem to have been base tale-bearers, like Doeg, for they offered to betray David to Saul.

MAMA. Well might he say of both, in the 54th Psalm, composed on this occasion: "Strangers are risen against me, and oppressors seek after my soul. They have not set God before them." But with pious gratitude he was enabled *to add, when* the special providence of God had

diverted the proposed attack upon him, into another quarter; "Behold God is mine helper; the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. For he hath delivered me out of my trouble; and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies."

How was this unexpected deliverance accomplished?

MARY. A messenger came to tell Saul, that the Philistines had invaded the land; and he was forced to return from pursuing after David. I daresay God put it into their hearts to invade Israel at that time, just to deliver David.

MAMA. Such Divine interpositions are by no means uncommon, in Holy Writ, and such a one David seems here to acknowledge, when he says in overflowing gratitude, "I will freely sacrifice to Thee. I will praise thy name, O Lord, for it is good."

And, so many are the unseen providences and deliverances, daily occurring in the path of the Christian—that this song of thanksgiving may at all times be echoed from the depths of a grateful heart; remembering only, while it is uttered, on the same high authority, that the only legitimate "sacrifices" of God, are a "broken and contrite spirit:" and that to be able to praise God acceptably with David, we must first have invoked him in our need, and obeyed him in our conduct.

MORNING SEVENTH.

LESSON.—1st Samuel, Chapters xxiv. and xxvi.

MAMA. I have made you read in connexion, the two chapters separated from each other, by the episode of David's adventure with Nabal—both to allow us to consider in all its bearings, that remarkable incident, and still more, to combine within the small compass in which they really occurred, the two affecting instances of generosity, manifested by David, and the flagrant ingratitude with which they were twice (in spite of temporary protestations) utterly forgotten by Saul. We might again appeal in vain to the records of pagan antiquity, for deeds of such pure disinterestedness, as the fear of God, and respect for his anointed king, seem to have rendered easy to the generous nature of David; while the reckless perfidy, and blood-thirstiness, with which they were requited, can only be attributed to the direct suggestions of that "evil one," who we know, was a "liar" as well as "murderer from the beginning."

Where did the first of these affecting encoun-

ters between one, who at this time represent himself, as a "bird in the net of the fowler, and his implacable persecutor, take place?

MARY. In the "strongholds of Engedi,"—does that mean a fortress?

MAMA. No, truly; for none such existed i the "wilderness," whither Saul had gone, "t seek David and his men, among the rocks of th wild goats." But how wonderfully were the re lative positions of the "bird" and "fowler" re versed—when Providence sent Saul to take h noon-day repose, in the very cave in which Da vid and his men were already concealed!

MARY. Mama, how could they both be ther without seeing each other?

MAMA. Very easily, from the great size, an extensive ramifications of the caves in Palestine in one of which, a traveller tells us, he had him self been, capable of separately harbouring tw bodies of men, more numerous than those Saul or David.

MARY. It was no wonder that David's me thought the time was come for killing Sau Most people would have taken him prisoner least, to keep him from doing more mischief.

MAMA. You forget, Mary, that you are spea ing of a monarch, still reigning, by the forbea ance, if not express appointment of Jehovah,

and consequently invested, in the eyes of right thinking persons, with an awful sanctity; which made David's heart smite him, for having even yielded to the pardonable temptation of cutting off a portion of the royal robe. Why did he do this?

MARY. Oh! that Saul might really believe he had been in his power. But Mama! how could David be so bold (even after letting Saul escape) as to call him, and talk to him,—he was so treacherous?

MAMA. He was, Mary; but even repeated experience fails to shake the trust of a generous disposition, in the better qualities of our common nature; and for once, David calculated rightly in supposing, that his more than filial submission and devotedness, must conquer, at least, for a time, the inveterate enmity of Saul. Hard, indeed, and unnatural must have been the soul of him, who could retain his ferocity, while beholding one so lately master of his life and kingdom,—prostrate on the earth before him, and accosting him by no title less respectful, than that of "my lord, the king!"

How convincing too, how irresistible were the arguments David could now allege to confute his enemies,—with the skirt of the robe of him, (whom he still duteously calls "father,") yet in

his hand—while its owner stood uninjured in the presence of one, who had every human inducement, and the fairest opportunity, to kill him. If we add to its irrefragable truth, the dignified piety of David's address to Saul, and reference of their quarrel to the decision of the Almighty,—the touching humility with which he seeks to disarm resentment, by representing himself as the most contemptible of beings, unworthy the hostility of so mighty a monarch—(and all this set before us in the inimitable language of Scripture)—can we wonder that even Saul, under temporary emotion, "lifted up his voice and wept," and made to his rival the hard-wrung confession, "Thou art more righteous than I?"

MARY. He might well say that, Mama! I am sure *he* would not have spared David; indeed, he says, "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?"

MAMA. But what a still more glorious triumph—undimmed too, by a single circumstance of alloy—did David obtain, when his subdued foe, (unable himself to reward such generosity) actually prayed the Lord to bless his enemy for it! Except, perhaps, the distinct acknowledgment, now for the first time extorted from Saul, of David's destined sovereignty,—nothing could

more strongly mark the resistless, though alas! short-lived, supremacy of virtue.

How do you suppose this conviction had been at length reluctantly forced upon Saul?

MARY. I think David's noble behaviour, Mama, must have made him see there was something more about him than a common man; and that God was "surely with him."

MAMA. Exactly. Such truly royal magnanimity could only have found a place, in the breast of one, confident in the immutability of God's promises, and content to wait the time appointed by him for their fulfilment. But imagine, Mary, how deep must have been that sense of humiliation, which could make the proud king of Israel stipulate with his acknowledged successor, for the safety of his "seed," and the preservation of his "name in his father's house!" Surely the feelings of the moment, in which David, with ready generosity, took upon him the office of protector to the posterity of his deadly foe—must have outweighed all the puny gratification, which a few months or years earlier possession of that enemy's kingdom, could have conferred on a more ambitious character! And who under the influence of such feelings, would not have preferred accompanying David to his desert cavern, rather than Saul to his joyless, and unblest palace?

Unblest indeed it must have proved—for how soon do we find him once more the implacable pursuer of David?

MARY. I don't know, Mama. Did the chapter we have left out about Nabal, come between?

MAMA. Certainly not; for the events it records were connected with the time of the death of Samuel; and if we suppose, with the Jews, that he died only four months before Saul, they must have happened long subsequent to the *second* encounter between him and David. If again, as is more generally believed, the death of Samuel preceded that of the king, by two full years—the sheep shearing of Nabal must have taken place before the *first* meeting in the cave of Engedi. At all events, a period, incredibly short, elapsed before we find the unhappy monarch once more, as David pathetically expresses it, hunting for his life "as a partridge in the mountains."

At whose base suggestion was this black expedition undertaken?

MARY. The "Ziphites" came a second time to betray David. What could have made them hate him so?

MAMA. The motive for their animosity is not mentioned; but a natural one may have arisen,

the temporal advantages connected with a residence in his own country?

MARY. Oh! no. For "driving him" out of the inheritance of the Lord, saying, "Go down, serve other gods." Mama! nobody could *force* him to do this.

MAMA. No. But by obliging him to wander among the neighbouring heathen—not only was he cut off from the spiritual privileges of his own national worship, but exposed to temptation, or persecution, on account of the unhallowed rites of others. Would that all of us were disposed to assign to *our* far more valuable spiritual blessings, the first place, (like David,) in our regard, or our regrets!

But do you perceive any peculiar fitness in the comparison of himself to a hunted "partridge," so affectingly used by David, to work on the bitter feelings of Saul?

MARY. No, Mama; people do not go out to "*hunt*" partridges, (as they do bears or wolves,) with great numbers, like Saul, but generally alone.

MAMA. Yes; in civilized countries, where sport, not subsistence, is the chief object. But the Arabs, we are told by eastern travellers, at this day,—instead of employing dogs to discover and surprise the unsuspecting game,—actually pursue them (as Saul did David) from place to

place; till the poor birds, after repeatedly alighting, and being put up, sink finally exhausted, and are dispatched with bludgeons, in a manner we should think both cruel and disgraceful. These little particulars, trifling as they are, will enable you better to appreciate the similarity of David's condition, with that of the "hunted" bird, driven from each successive refuge by a band of relentless pursuers.

MARY. Mama, I wonder Saul never really became a good man; he was always so ready to say "I have sinned."

MAMA. When you have lived longer in the world, my dear, you will find that the very facility of disposition which makes acknowledgment of error easy, is a fatal agent in its repetition. Had Saul, instead of saying he had "sinned," nay, "played the fool, and erred exceedingly,"—proved his conviction of the humiliating truth, by recalling David at once to his court and favour, his own sincerity would have been less questionable; and David would have been spared a cruel exile, from which his integrity, as well as life, were in imminent jeopardy.

But even while ruthlessly abandoned to such unmerited hardships and perils, by him who pretended to invoke on his head the blessing of the Lord —how far superior does David appear to his abject

persecutor! What is his dignified reply to expressions of compunction, belied by the absence of any solid tokens of returning esteem and confidence?"

MARY. "The Lord render to every man his righteousness, and his faithfulness. For the Lord delivered thee into mine hand to-day; but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed. And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day, in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by, in the eyes of the Lord; and let him deliver me out of all tribulation."

MAMA. And would David, think you, have exchanged these feelings—not of proud human superiority, but conscious integrity, supported on the protection and immutable equity of God, for the temporary exaltation, and thorny throne of the man who shrunk in baffled littleness before him? No, Mary. And let us learn from his example, to share in his conviction, that "better is the favour of God than life,"—poverty, with his blessing, than unhallowed prosperity,—and even exile among heathens and enemies, preferable to a crown purchased by violation of His law, and rebellion against His anointed.

MORNING EIGHTH.

LESSON.—1st Samuel, Chapter xxv.

MAMA. We have now returned to the lately omitted chapter, containing the account of the transactions between David and the family of Nabal, the Carmelite; affording, not only many interesting particulars regarding the manners of the then (as now) almost patriarchal east, but instructive moral lessons for regulating our intercourse with our fellow-creatures of every rank; from which, even many who profess to be governed by the higher principle of Christian courtesy, need not disdain to derive an example.

But, by what melancholy event were the circumstances related in this chapter preceded?

MARY. The death of Samuel. No wonder, Mama, that all the Israelites lamented him.

MAMA. No, indeed. But I shall be glad if you can tell me on what especial qualities this universal regret was justly founded?

MARY. You know, Mama, we read all about his being prayed for by his mother, and then de-

dicated by her to God,—his being called in his sleep when a little child, and intrusted with God's sad message to Eli—and then his governing all Israel so well and justly for a very long time, that, when at last he made a king to please them, and bade them farewell, he challenged any one to say he had ever hurt or done him wrong.

MAMA. A very good and succinct summary, my dear, of the delightful history we lately read, of one of God's most eminent and faithful servants; whose steadfastness and fidelity, remember—in times of corruption, such as those of Eli and Saul,—were entirely founded on the spirit and temper manifested by him in childhood.

How did he reply to the early call of the heavenly Master, to whose service he had been devoted in the cradle?

MARY. He first started up, and said, "Here am I," when he only thought old Eli called him. But when aware it was God himself, he said, "speak Lord, for thy servant heareth."

MAMA. Yes, Mary, and with Samuel, (as with all really faithful servants,) to "hear was to obey; and this principle it was which governed his long and useful life. Ready at God's command, to bear, like Moses, on his shoulders, the burden of a whole "stiff-necked and rebellious *people*,"—*he* was readier still to resign, without

a regret, save for that people's misjudging choice, —the sway he had so unimpeachably exercised. He died at the ripe age of ninety-eight years; eighteen of which (since the accession of Saul) he had spent in tranquil and religious retirement. Can you tell me in what spot and society the prophet's declining age was passed?

MARY. We read of his lately being at Naioth, in the college of the prophets. But I suppose that was only at times; for his house was at Ramah, and there he was buried.

MAMA. In all probability, beside his good father, Elkanah, and yet more excellent mother, Hannah; a place in the "sepulchre of their fathers" being to all pious Jews, an object of fervent and paramount desire. But what record, more lasting than the most costly or durable monument, has this great and good man left, to entitle him to the gratitude of Christians, as well as Israelites?

MARY. I suppose you mean this very book we are reading. Did he write it, Mama? But no, he could not, since it mentions his own death.

MAMA. The first twenty-four chapters (those we have have hitherto read) are universally ascribed to him; and the subsequent portion of David's history—which still goes under Samuel's name—is considered as part of the same work;

originally undertaken by him, in conjunction with the prophets Nathan and Gad.

How deeply are we indebted, for the affecting accounts we have lately read, of David's early piety and triumphs—and subsequent reverses and wanderings—to him, who was not only their sympathizing eye-witness, but a counsellor in his trials, and a refuge in his persecutions. And how much of the resignation, and fortitude, and loyalty, we so much admire in the character of David, may be reasonably ascribed to the example and influence of his aged friend and benefactor; whose eyes again, must have closed in peace, on the no longer distant prospect of so promising a monarch (whom he had himself anointed) being exalted by the Lord, to rule over his beloved country.

But we must reluctantly take leave of Samuel, to follow David to the wilderness of Paran. Is there anything familiar to you in the title of this portion of the desert?

MARY. Yes; it is mentioned in the last song of Moses; and you told me it was one of the names of the desert of "Sinai."

MAMA. It was; and no doubt like his great predecessor Moses, David was reminded by the locality, that the spot on which he wandered was "*holy* ground."

MARY. Oh! Mama, I am sorry to see that good faithful Caleb should have a churlish descendant like Nabal!

MAMA. It is indeed distressing, my dear, that virtues, like possessions, should not be hereditary. But this, alas! we shall see yet more sadly exemplified in the family of David.

By what external circumstances—capable of softening the most unpromising natural temper—was the lot of this degenerate scion of Caleb, distinguished?

MARY. He was rich, and great, and prosperous—and had a beautiful, and good, and clever wife besides; but the "man was churlish, and evil in his doings."

MAMA. Yes, my dear, when prosperity fails to expand and soften, it too often hardens and contracts the heart. And on this account it is, as well as from the peculiar facilities they hold out to "forget God," that riches are said in Scripture to be a "temptation and a snare;" and the entrance of a "rich man" into the "kingdom of heaven," is represented by our Saviour, under a popular metaphor, almost amounting to impossibility. But remember, it is not to the possession, but the abuse of wealth, that the fearful denunciation applies; for it is those only who "*trust in riches*," who place on them their affec-

tions and confidence, to the exclusion of God and their fellow-creatures—who shall as fruitlessly expect to be saved, as the camels of Arabia, or the elephants of India, (where we find the proverb, quoted by our Lord, in daily use) would stoop their huge forms beneath a *literal* needles' eye—or rather, (as some interpret the proverb) those wicket gates of eastern court-yards, made *purposely low*, to exclude a mounted enemy.

But in what cheerful, and usually social occupation was Nabal engaged, when David's courteous, and, one would have thought, well-timed message, was delivered to him?

MARY. Sheepshearing, Mama. I believe it is always a time of rejoicing.

MAMA. Yes, in all pastoral countries; where so much of wealth is derived from the produce of the flocks, in which the riches of their mightiest princes chiefly consist; and the very extent of which, ought, in the present case, to have disposed the possessor to munificence. Was there anything in the message itself to provoke displeasure?

MARY. Oh, no; it was the kindest, as well as civilest, ever delivered. It did nothing but wish Nabal, and all he had, peace and prosperity; and ask him very modestly, for a little of what he could so well spare.

MAMA. Had David any right—beyond the

mere natural claim of every one in straits, on his richer brethren—to presume on the liberality of Nabal?

MARY. I don't know, Mama; all he says is, that he never *hurt* Nabal's shepherds, or took any thing of their's, while they were together. This was not much.

MAMA. Yes, if you reflect that in so saying, (considering the lawless character and frequent distress for subsistence of his exiled followers,) David insinuates, though in the most delicate manner, the positive protection he must have afforded to the unwarlike servants of Nabal. Such a plea, at such a joyous time, ought indeed to have "found favour in the eyes of Nabal;" and its brutal repulse was as ungenerous towards a kind and considerate neighbour, as it was impolitic towards an armed and powerful one.

What was the insulting tenor of Nabal's answer?

MARY. Oh! the rudest in the world. He said, "Who is David the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away, every man from his master." And he would give him nothing—not even the "water" he had "provided for his shearers." Why is that mentioned, Mama? Surely if there was water to wash sheep in, there would be plenty to drink.

MAMA. I wish the reflection you bestowed, on recollecting that sheep were washed, previous to shearing, had extended to the unfitness thus occasioned in the pool, or river, for immediate drinking, and which no doubt gave rise to the previous "provision;" though to this day, travellers tell us, that "carrying water" to the reapers and field labourers, is a regular branch of eastern harvest expense.

What appears to have been David's first impulse, on receiving so affronting a message?

MARY. To go and punish Nabal at once—for he ordered four hundred men to get ready for fighting. How could Nabal be such a fool as to provoke him?

MAMA. The surly and brutal, Mary, are seldom endowed with prudence. But by whom was the "soft answer" that "turneth away wrath" providentially found?

MARY. By Abigail, Nabal's wife. She was a sensible person, and could understand reason, and that made the servants tell her what David had done for them. And I see, Mama, it was really all as you supposed—for the men said he had been "as a wall to them, night and day." How well he deserved all he had asked from Nabal!

MAMA. And how fortunate for all concerned,

that the influence conferred by her discretion upon Abigail, in the household of her stupid and ferocious husband, enabled her to save his property, if not his life, by a well-timed and munificent present. In what did this seasonable supply for David's famishing followers consist?

MARY. "Two hundred loaves, and five sheep, ready dressed," (I suppose, for the sheep-shearers, else she would hardly have had so many by her,) and corn, and figs, and raisins, and the "two bottles" of wine, which I used to wonder at when a child,—till you explained to me that they were large skins like barrels. Abigail was quite right to go herself, and make the apology; but why did she send the present on before her?

MAMA. As an obvious means of conciliation, lest David's exasperated feelings should have denied her a patient hearing. Do you remember any other instance in Scripture, where one, more guilty far than poor Abigail, and justly doubtful of his reception, took the same precaution?

MARY. Let me think. Did not Jacob, when afraid to face Esau, send him a large present of cattle beforehand?

MAMA. Precisely; and as presents in the east, betoken submission, as well as good will, the policy in both cases was good.

Had Abigail miscalculated the probable anger of David?

MARY. Oh! no. It was very different now from his gentleness to Saul; for he resolved to kill Nabal, and all belonging to him. Yet surely Saul's ingratitude was worse than Nabal's!

MAMA. Certainly, Mary, more bitter and cutting, and reiterated far. And this should shew us that pious scruples had power to restrain (in the former instance) the warmth of temper now so visible in David. It was the monarch, not the man, he respected and spared in Saul,—the "anointed of the Lord," and not his own personal enemy, towards whom the forbearance we so much admire, was chiefly exercised.

But we shall find, that though passionate under strong provocation, David was at all times placable; by his ready acceptance of the humble excuses of Abigail. What did she plead?

MARY. The natural folly of her husband, whose name, "Nabal," she says, "is like him;" —what does it mean?

MAMA. A "foolish man," and was probably, like many in the east, rather a by-word founded on his character, than a name given at birth, by wealthy parents to their heir.

But how artfully does Abigail congratulate

David (as if he were already appeased, and his anger averted) on having been withheld by the Lord from avenging his own quarrel; and found upon this anticipated forbearance, a flattering prediction of his future success against his enemies. In what terms is this remarkably fulfilled assurance conveyed?

MARY. "The Lord will surely make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord; and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days." Mama, what a strange expression she uses, when she says, David's soul "shall be bound up in the bundle of life" with God. I have heard it sometimes used in prayers, but could hardly understand it.

MAMA. The figure is a strong, and eastern, but very expressive one, especially when contrasted with our Lord's description of the "tares," gathered together in "bundles," to be burned; or the simile here applied to David's enemies, of worthless stones, which, when once cast out of a sling, having answered their purpose, are no more sought after or valued.

But how gladly do we recognize the upright and amiable prevailing character of David's mind, in that feature of Abigail's address to which he instantly refers, as having not only disarmed his resentment, but proved a blessing from the Lord.

in so doing. Far from assuming, as a merit, the relinquishment of his sanguinary purpose, or attributing it with eastern hyperbole, to the personal attractions to which he so soon after shewed himself not insensible—he first blesses "the Lord God of Israel, who had that day sent her to him," and the advice so prudently and discreetly given,—and then the giver of it, who had, under providence, kept him from coming to "shed blood," and avenging himself with his own hand. So that it is neither elation at the abject submission of a woman of almost princely rank, nor complacency in her prediction of his own future greatness, but thankfulness for having been preserved from *sin*, which occupies the prominent place in his feelings and reply.

It is this tenderness of conscience—and docility under divine rebuke—and instant recoil, as it were, of the better part of David's nature from the *verge*, (as well as in some unhappy instances from the fatal precincts of crime,) which, deeply studied, and carefully weighed against the few but heinous transgressions of his life—would go far to justify, even to our finite apprehensions, the favourable estimate formed by Him, "to whom all hearts are open," of the character of his much calumniated servant. Our short ac*quaint*ance with it has already shewn us that it

combined piety, humility, and sincerity towards God, with candour, generosity, and forgiveness towards men, even enemies; and yet it is no uncommon thing with those, who are themselves utter strangers to such heavenly dispositions, to rail at David as a compound of crimes, and at God, as if he complacently connived at or approved them.

But if emotions of gratitude, for the prevention of sin, were thus uppermost in the breast of David, when he courteously dismissed Abigail—what effect had the recital of his narrow escape, on the brutal rich man; who, having like his gospel prototype, "goods laid up for many years," had said to his soul, "eat, drink, and be merry?"

MARY. Oh! Mama! when the drunken wretch came to himself, and his wife told him these things, "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone." But was it really on David's account that God smote Nabal, so that he died ten days after?

MAMA. There is nothing in the expression, Mary, to lead us to suppose that the event was any other than an ordinary visitation of providence—accelerated, probably, by the man's own vices of brutality and intemperance; the former of which, prompted him to outrage—while the effects of the latter, left his frame so enfeebled, as to ren-

the shock of David's, even meditated vengeance, fatal. It is stated by Josephus, and believed by the Jews in general, that a stroke of apoplexy thus occasioned, was the cause of Nabal's quickly following death.

Be this as it may, David's gratitude for divine interposition, was enhanced by the absence of guilt on his part, in the removal of his unreasonable foe.

By what step did he shortly after prove his approbation of the rare virtue and prudence of Abigail?

MARY. By proposing to take her to wife. I thought he was married already to Michal, Saul's daughter, who had saved his life by her cleverness. What had become of her all this time?

MAMA. The end of our chapter tells us she had been unjustifiably bestowed, by her father, on another man, "Phalti the son of Laish;" so that David (even had the unhappy custom of the time not allowed a plurality of wives,) was, in the eyes of man, released from his former ties. But amiable, and discreet, and modest as Abigail's previous conduct, and present reply to his proposals, proved her to be—never forget, Mary, while reading the history of David, that to the fatal abuse of the tacit permission, rather than express sanction of the Mosaic law, for the

multiplicity of wives, may be traced most of the dreadful crimes and misfortunes, by which his family was disgraced, and his own paternal feelings outraged and torn.

From the union (here recorded,) with Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, sprung one of the most criminal, as well as unfortunate of the sons of David; the guilty source of nearly all the tissue of horrors, which sent the grey-headed parent of a degenerate offspring, mourning to his grave.

MARY. Mama! I wonder a woman so great and powerful as Abigail had shown herself to be, spoke so slavishly, and bowed her face to the ground when David's servants came to ask her to marry him. She could not have been more humble and delighted, if she had been a poor gleaner, like Ruth.

MAMA. Alas! Mary, in the east still, as in those times, the riches and consequence of a woman, even of princely rank, generally expire with her husband. And such are the evils, to which the want of a male protector there, exposes a lone female, that the seeming precipitation with which Abigail accompanied the servants of David, is fully accounted for; while the retinue of five damsels, who followed her steps, formed, probably, the only relics of the state and grandeur which, during Nabal's life, she had enjoyed.

But the exchange, to a woman of her disposition, must have been a blessed one, from hourly shame and disgust at the conduct of a wealthy but illiberal churl, to sharing the fortunes (precarious as they were) of a chosen servant of God; and future ruler—as she herself had predicted—over his people Israel.

Of her subsequent conduct on a throne we know nothing; but may derive from her behaviour in a private station, (examples drawn from which are more generally applicable,) lessons of feminine prudence, gentleness, and courtesy; by the judicious exercise of which in women, much mischief among ruder spirits, may often be averted; and the female character displayed in its fairest and most valuable light, as the healer of angry passions, and promoter of peace and good will among mankind.

MORNING NINTH.

LESSON—1st Samuel, Chapters xxvii. xxix. and xxx.

MARY. Mama! I am shocked and surprised that David should say in his heart, at the beginning of our first chapter, that he should "surely perish one day, by the hand of Saul!" Had he forgotten God's promises, and all his own beautiful psalms, that he ran away to the wicked Philistines?

MAMA. My dear Mary, the disapprobation you express, is only natural. But, alas! not more so, than the occasional distrust and despondence of the most favoured of God's servants, when the sustaining influence of the Holy Spirit is (probably for their wholesome abasement) temporarily withdrawn. Did the confidence of Abraham, of Moses, of Elijah, those "excellent ones of the earth," never desert them—or has the same Spirit failed to record other instances, for our mingled humiliation and encouragement?

MARY. No, indeed. Abraham called Sarah his sister, out of fear; and Moses was afraid to go to Pharaoh; and Elijah fled into the wilder-

part of the original inheritance of Judah, and though temporarily transferred, in a subsequent allotment, to the tribe of Simeon,—it ultimately you see, became (by the gift of a heathen king) the property of those to whom Moses had assigned it.

MARY. Mama! David was quite right to do to the Amalekites what God was so angry with Saul for not doing; but I wish he had not said to Achish, that it was people of *Judah*, he had been fighting against. How could such a courageous man tell a lie about it?

MAMA. To teach us, Mary, the bitter, but salutary lesson, how much more easy and common, are the loftiest efforts of mere animal bravery, than the moral courage required to encounter the consequences of our own right actions. In the fear and strength of his God, David could attack, and utterly spoil the powerful Amalekites —left to his own weakness, he condescended to an unmanly evasion, and chose rather to pass for a base traitor to his own nation, than a bold avenger of its wrongs, and its God. That the deceit was too shallow, to ensure even its unhallowed purpose, of quieting the suspicions, and lulling the jealousies of the Philistines, we see from the beginning of the chapter, to which, (for the sake of connexion) I have made you

pass. But let me see if you can gather from it, to what dreadfully sinful alternative, his former prevarication, had well nigh reduced the anointed king of Israel?

MARY. The Philistines gathered together all their armies to "Aphek;" and, as it says, the Israelites pitched near "Jezreel." I suppose they were going to have a battle. And was David really going to be so wicked as to join God's enemies against his own people?

MAMA. What his line of conduct, in a fatal dilemma of his own creating, *would* have really been, had not the natural misgivings of his heathen allies been so mercifully overruled by God, as to make for him, "with the temptation, a way to escape,"—we cannot presume to pronounce. From his well-known patriotism, it seems most likely—(a belief confirmed by his equivocal answer to Achish,) that he would really have justified the suspicions of the Philistine princes, by going over once more to the ranks of his lawful sovereign; and in thus doing, have requited with perfidious ingratitude, three years of generous protection from Achish. But Mary, what a strong, what an irresistible lesson does this dilemma of David,—involving on the one hand forfeiture of allegiance to his king, his country, and his God,—and on the other hand, base ingratitude and treachery to

his benefactor,—afford against placing ourselves, by any deliberate act of our own, in situations of inevitable temptation!

Had David remained, to use his own noble but forgotten expressions,—"under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty," even an "outcast in Israel,"—he might now, in the great national emergency, have been very probably recalled to fight under the banners of his reconciled sovereign, and side by side with his beloved Jonathan—against the hereditary enemies of Israel; instead of being ignominiously hunted as a traitor and renegade, from what he emphatically calls the "tents of Meshech." And had he never, with cowardly duplicity, suffered his just vengeance on Amalek, to pass for a hostile inroad against Judea,—not even the unsuspecting and confiding monarch of Gath himself, could have dreamed of summoning the conqueror of Goliath to unnatural participation in an expedition against Israel. So that to his unhappy selection of a heathen protector—and subsequent deception, practised on that very benefactor—we can clearly trace the sinful predicament in which David stood, as an ally in the camp of the ungodly; and his shameful (though providential) expulsion from its unhallowed ranks.

MARY. How thankful he must have been

when he was sent away—without either fighting against his people, or betraying good-natured Achish.

MAMA. Yes! and to God alone could he ascribe a deliverance from a choice of evils, entirely beyond his own skill to accomplish.

But was his absence on this unholy service, wholly unproductive of suffering?

MARY. Oh! no. The Amalekites had taken advantage of it, and burnt his town, and taken all the people prisoners—David's wives, and all! He really deserved it, Mama; and I am not very sorry for him, though he "wept till he had no more power to weep."

MAMA. These were wholesome tears, depend upon it, Mary—and extorted from so courageous and manly a spirit, far more by a sense of deserved chastisement, than by the temporary loss even of those dearest to him. That they were in reality, drawn forth by penitence, (though embittered doubtless by the just reproaches of his indignant followers, who even "spake of stoning him,") appears from the immediate consolation which David in his grief, sought from his outraged, but merciful God.

Did his sense of having offended, estrange him, as it does too many—from the footstool of the Majesty on High?

MARY. No; he sent for Abiathar the priest, and enquired of the Lord whether he should pursue after the Amalekites. Mama! I am glad he did it,—and he must have been glad to have the priest and the "ephod" by him. But surely any man so fond of his wives and children, and so bold as David was, would have tried to get them back, at the risk of his life, even without asking leave.

MAMA. And this is precisely what makes David's submissive reference to Him whose hand had dealt the blow—before attempting to recover his precious domestic treasures—a clear proof of his humbled and penitent frame of mind; and accounts, in the only profitable, satisfactory, and convincing manner, for the gracious encouragement, and ultimate success vouchsafed by Him whose "name is mercy," and who afflicts his children but to draw them to Himself. No sooner is the permission given, and Divine power pledged to the happy result, than we see David's natural courage and determination revive,—for so hotly is the pursuit conducted, that two hundred, out of his six hundred followers, are left, utterly exhausted, by the side of a friendly brook!

But by what providential state of destitution in another—and an enemy—was David's uncer-

tainty as to the course pursued by the ravagers of his household—removed?

MARY. A young Egyptian had been left sick by his Amalekite master, in the fields, till he was half dead and famished; and he told David's people where their enemies would be found. I suppose it was out of revenge for his master leaving him so inhumanly.

MAMA. Partly, no doubt; for in those days the life of a slave (which all servants were) was of little account in the eyes of any one. But let us hope that gratitude for rescue from present famine, had its share in influencing the poor fugitive.

In what defenceless state were the spoilers of Ziklag discovered, by its bereaved husbands and fathers?

MARY. "All spread abroad upon the earth, eating, and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil they had taken from Ziklag, and from the land of Judah." So they had been robbing David's own countrymen at home, besides!

MAMA. Yes, which would no doubt assist in animating his vengeance. But why, do you suppose, were the luckless invaders so utterly secure, and careless of pursuit?

MARY. Because they could not know that David would be sent back from the army, and

supposed him with Achish all the time. Mama! if God had let him stay with the Philistines, he never would have seen wife or child more!

MAMA. Most probably not; which must have enhanced his sense of God's undeserved and timely interposition. But do you remark any thing in the account given of the slaughter of the Amalekites, which makes it evident that without Divine encouragement and aid, it would have been equally mad and vain in David to pursue or attack them?

MARY. It says, "there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, that got away on camels." Surely, Mama, if such were the small remains of their army (just as many as David had altogether) he never could have got back his wives and goods unless God had helped him.

MAMA. Certainly not; nor could the attempt have ever been made, but in the strength of a higher Power, and under a sense of Divine forgiveness and reconciliation.

By what act of mingled kindness and justice to others did David acknowledge the greatness of his personal mercies?

MARY. The four hundred strong men who went all the way with David, and fought with the *Amalekites*—wanted not to give any share of

what they had taken back, to those who were too tired to go on. How unjust!

MAMA. Stay Mary, are you not doing injustice yourself, to the brave band by whom the rescue was accomplished—by involving *all* in an act of selfish and narrow policy, in which four hundred of David's chosen companions were surely incapable of concurring?

MARY. Oh! I see, it was only the "wicked men, and men of Belial of those who went with David," that said so; I beg pardon of the others.

MAMA. Let it be a warning to you against all hasty and general accusations, often involving, on no better grounds, the innocent with the guilty. How did David nobly rebuke the unbrotherly spirit by which his troop of chosen warriors was partially infected and disgraced?

MARY. He said, "ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us; who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us, into our hand." Mama, David speaks like himself now; I am always *so* sorry when he does otherwise!

MAMA. Are you indeed, my child? and does your young heart take an unconscious interest in the manifestations of a "renewed and contrite spirit," in the breast of a king of Israel who lived three thousand years ago? And do you think He

by whom that heart was formed, and who knows its "very frame"—does not watch, with far holier and intenser earnestness, the first movement of returning piety and penitence, in your own, and every human bosom? If there is "joy among the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth,"—never forget the far loftier, yet deeper interest of the God of angels, in the welfare of the "souls that He hath made."

I am persuaded Mary, that were one spark of the feeling of praiseworthy emulation, which makes a child, in the presence of an affectionate parent, guard its behaviour, and double its exertions—transferred, as is due, to our Father in heaven"—we should soon have answering proofs, as certain perhaps, though not so obvious, as his returning mercies to David,—that, in the inspired and cheering words of the Psalmist himself, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way"—that "He will hear his cry when his heart is overwhelmed, and will set him on the rock that is higher than he"—that He who hath shewn him great and sore troubles, shall quicken him again, and bring him up from the depths of the earth"—that "the Lord will give grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from him that walketh uprightly,"

and that "he will perfect all that concerneth him, because his mercy endureth for ever."

But lest the diffidence and humility inseparable from conscious guilt, should deter any from appropriating promises, conferred on the righteous alone—let us hear those which the same Holy Spirit addresses to the erring and penitent.

"Blessed is the man whom the Lord chasteneth, and teacheth him out of his law."

"He shall speak peace unto his people, and unto his saints, but let them not turn again unto folly."

"He forgiveth all their iniquities, and healeth all their diseases, and crowneth them with mercy and loving kindness."

"For he knoweth their frame, and remembereth that they are but dust."

"Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy, and he who goeth forth weeping and bearing precious seed, shall return again with rejoicing bearing his sheaves with him."

"He shall lead them, and his right hand shall hold them, and when the love of God is in their heart, none of their footsteps shall slide."

And finally, to reassure them as to their ultimate portion,

"The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, for He is their strength."

"Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, for they shall walk in the light of his countenance for ever."

MORNING TENTH.

LESSON.—1st Samuel, Chapters xxviii. and xxxi.

MARY. I suppose, Mama, as you made me leave out this chapter, what passed in it between Achish and David about fighting against Israel, belongs to our yesterday's reading.

MAMA. It does. But it was not without a double reason that I determined to preserve unbroken the connexion between Saul's unlawful attempts to penetrate the future,—and the accomplishment of the awful prediction they elicited. In the first place, because some of the best and most careful expositors hold it to have been literally fulfilled, by the defeat and death, on the actual "morrow," of the rejected monarch; and because (even should a few days or longer have intervened) it must ever be profitable to trace—as visibly as we are here permitted to do, the connexion between crime and punishment—between deserved abandonment by God, and disgrace, defeat, and despair. As if to signify the

removal of the last shield interposed by the prayer of the righteous between Saul and his impending doom—the death of Samuel—generally believed to have happened about four months previous, is again recorded; and nothing can more strongly prove the involuntary confidence, which (even under long and melancholy estrangement) Saul reposed in his early master,—than his desire to recall, from the quiet of the grave, this bold, though reluctant reprover. So true is it, Mary, that when every ground of false trust is at the hour of peril or death, "utterly swept away," even the wicked are fain to flee for refuge to the formerly despised, or at least, unheeded professors of true religion.

But what emphatic precept of the law of Moses had Saul (at the suggestion, it is thought, of holy Samuel) early in his reign, enforced?

MARY. Putting away "those that had familiar spirits, and wizards out of the land." Mama! had any body ever really devils under their command,—or did they only pretend to it?

MAMA. To what extent (previous to the coming of our Lord, and consequent limitation of his "kingdom") Satan had power given him to delude the souls, as we know he was permitted to enslave the bodies of men—it might be presumptuous to determine. All we know is, that pretend-

ers to necromancy in later times, have been universally either the authors of gross imposture, or the victims of superstitious folly. That the woman mentioned in our chapter, belonged to the former class, is evident from the terror and surprise with which she was overwhelmed, when, by a higher agency, the power to which she pretended, was really exercised.

But by what fatal emergency was Saul driven to invoke one of the very sorceresses he had formerly proscribed and extirpated?

MARY. The Philistines had "gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem;" and you know, Mama, he had now no David to fight on his side, but I suppose, rather expected him to be with Achish against him.

MAMA. True. And how much must he now have regretted the loss of his bravest, and most faithful champion; especially as we are told, on the authority of ancient writers—that this (on account of the Philistines being joined by an immense body of expatriated Egyptians) was by far the most formidable invasion with which they ever menaced Israel.

But, Mary, was it the "fear and trembling," alone, with which the approach of his enemies inspired him,—that shook the once bold and warlike spirit of Saul?

MARY. Oh! no. Time was, when he would not have been afraid, had they been twice as many! But though he *did* enquire of God, "the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." Mama! I thought David had got the high priest and ephod with him; and you told me, the "Urim," was in the high priest's breast-plate.

MAMA. I am glad you recollected this; but certain it is, that had the oracular breast-plate even been left behind, in the hurry of Abiathar's flight, after the massacre of his relatives, there was no one by whom, in his absence, it could be lawfully consulted. No wonder, therefore, that an "answer" was denied.

To what miserable expedient, for ascertaining the fate of the impending battle, was the misgiving heart of the unhappy monarch of Israel reduced?

MARY. He said, "Seek me out a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go and enquire of her."

MAMA. And does not this act of wilful and presumptuous disobedience, fully justify the Divine denial of counsel or aid, to one—prepared to resort, on the disappointment, to the very means which the God whom he mocked with "enquiries," had utterly denounced and forbidden? The

wretched object of his unhallowed pursuit, herself felt and derided an inconsistency, which she could only construe into a "snare," unworthy of a great monarch, for her conviction and apprehension, as a "witch." Nor could aught less than the yet grosser inconsistency, of a king of Israel swearing to her, by the God who had expressly said in his law, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,"—convince her that her life was indeed safe.

What did she, at his request, then undertake?

MARY. To bring up Samuel from the grave. Mama! could she, or any one, do this?

MAMA. Certainly not. But if, (like similar impostors of more modern times) she hoped, by the combined influence of glimmering darkness, of magical incantations, and optical delusions,—to work on the excited imagination of her royal visitor,—her schemes were unexpectedly and awfully forestalled, by the supernatural ascent from the grave, of him, whose rest, she well knew, it mocked her power to have successfully disturbed.

MARY. Oh! Mother! no wonder she "cried with a loud voice!" It was just as if people, playing at ghosts, to frighten others, were suddenly to see a real one! But why did she say,

she saw "gods" ascending out of the earth? were there more than one?

MAMA. No, Mary; but in her first awe and affright, at the supernatural vision, she used the same plural Hebrew word for God, which occurs in Genesis and elsewhere, and is often quoted, as confirming in a remarkable manner, the mysterious doctine of the Trinity. Saul's immediate question, however, "What form is *he* of," is a plain proof, that he understood her to speak of one being only.

MARY. I suppose, when she answered, an old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle, Saul must have ventured to look up; and when he "perceived that it was Samuel, he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself."

MAMA. Yes, Mary. In this act of abject humiliation before a greater than Samuel, by whom Saul felt he had been miraculously sent—as well as in the solemn rebuke, and unerring prediction of the resuscitated prophet—we may read the answer to the opinion held by some, either that the whole was a mere juggle, contrived and executed by the pretended sorceress—or the permitted work of evil spirits, actually evoked at her bidding. The former idea may have originated naturally enough with that un-

thinking multitude, by whom all miraculous agency is derided, or disbelieved. But how the latter notion (worthy only of the "house divided against itself," of the Pharisaical cavillers of our Lord's day,) came to find a place in the creed of any Christian, I am at a loss to imagine. In the only authentic addresses of evil spirits recorded in Scripture, as in the case of Eve in paradise —our Lord in the wilderness—and the assembled kings of Israel and Judah, to whom a "lying spirit" was mysteriously sent forth from before the Fountain of all Truth—delusion and deception was the universal object. And so unnatural must such awful words of godly rebuke, as became the mouth of Samuel, ever appear on the "lying lips" of a minister of darkness—that those only, to whom the "casting out of devils, by Beelzebub their prince" offers no contradiction, can ascribe them to infernal agency.

Let us, my dear Mary, draw from this awful interruption of the order of Providence, the solemn warnings which fell too late on the ear of the infatuated Saul. Let us tremble, as we learn from him, "who, being dead, yet speaketh,"—the appalling truth, that there is a period, when the long "grieved," and "quenched Spirit," finally "departs," and becomes an enemy. And that, in this state of anticipated spiritual death, not only "Mo[illegible]

and the prophets," nay, the blessed Gospel itself may become powerless to save or awaken; but that conviction would not be produced, even "though one rose from the dead!"

Did, indeed, this wonderfully-raised messenger deliver any new or different doctrine from what he often, when in the flesh, fruitlessly inculcated.

MARY. Oh! no. He just told Saul, as he had done years before, that, because he had disobeyed God, and spared the Amalekites, "the Lord had rent the kingdom out of his hand, and given it to his neighbour David." But what terrified Saul, I suppose, was to be told, that his time was at last come, and that, "to-morrow," he and his sons should be with Samuel.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, such is often the appalling effect of an announcement that cannot be mistaken, of approaching judgment, on the most callous and impenitent heart! As long as the denunciation was vague and distant, Saul could defy and disregard it; but when a voice from the tomb thus addressed him, "Thou fool!" to-morrow "shall thy soul be required of thee;" he sunk powerless on the earth; and "great fear fell on him, and there was no strength in him." Those who are fond of tracing coincidences have found a curious and not unedifying one, between the earliest and latest crime of Saul,—between the

power of sin in his first open act of disobedience —and in that infraction of the express law of God, by which the measure of his iniquity was at length filled up.

Do you remember by what strong terms of comparison, Samuel, while yet alive, stigmatized the pretended humanity of Saul in sparing Agag?

MARY. No. But I will look back and find it. Oh! I see what you mean. He says, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." And now Saul had been guilty of both; so no wonder God left him to his fate. But, Mama, though any one might be sorry to see a king in so sad a condition, I am surprised a "witch" should have so much good in her as to kill a fatted calf for him, and use him so kindly.

MAMA. Divination in those days, Mary, though forbidden among the Jews, by laws both human and divine, was held by neighbouring nations, in high esteem and veneration. And their "sibyls," or "pythonesses," (by which names females pretending to oracular power, were known,) being generally brought up in temples, and esteemed sacred, there did not attach to their vocation any of those sordid ideas of ill-will and malevolence, usually associated with "witchcraft," by the vulgar among ourselves. Do you not remember the traveller who lately pointed out to us, in his pla

of Pompeii, the secret communication between the seat of the "Pythoness" in the temple of Isis, and the priests by whom her responses were to be dictated?

MARY. Oh! yes; we saw it quite plainly; and I see now, that a witch in Judea might be a very different person from a witch in England.

MAMA. In external condition certainly. But never forget that both were alike impostors and liars; and as such, objects of contempt to man, and indignation to the God of truth.

But let us turn from their delusions, to the word of Him who "cannot lie." How were these, in the second of our chapters, sadly fulfilled?

MARY. "The men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain on Mount Gilboa." And oh! Mama! Jonathan was killed with the rest of the king's sons. How sorry David would be when he heard it!

MAMA. That he was so, you will indeed see and feel, when the most pathetic lamentation ever called forth by human friendship, comes under our notice to-morrow. But we must now follow to its close, the sad career of Saul.

By what event was he disabled from saving himself by flight?

[redacted] "The archers hit him, and he was sore [redacted] archers." What a state he must

have been reduced to, Mama, when he begged his armour-bearer, as a favour, to kill him!

MAMA. Yes; and when, on his servant's refusal, he, with a borrowed "sword," (his own having evidently been lost,) despairingly accomplished the work of self-destruction! It will, I daresay, be a satisfaction to you to learn, that as the Jews constantly affirm this "armour-bearer" to have been none other than "Doeg the Edomite," —his own suicide, and that of his wretched master, were probably perpetrated, with the very sword with which he sacrilegiously slew, at Saul's command, the anointed priests of the Lord.

MARY. Indeed it was only fair and right; and every body must think so. I am very sorry Jonathan's body was stripped and abused with the rest; for I am sure he did not deserve it.

MAMA. No, Mary. But from the inevitable involvement of the innocent in national calamities—let us draw the pleasing, as well as Scriptural inference of a future state of retribution; when "love" shall "have its perfect work"—and friendship "put on immortality"—and David and Jonathan, as they were "lovely in their lives" shall be, by death, no more "divided."

MORNING ELEVENTH.

LESSON.—2d Samuel, Chapters i. and ii.

MAMA. I am sure, my dear Mary, from your evident participation in the deep and pathetic feelings expressed by David, on hearing of the death of your favourite Jonathan, that you no longer doubt the extent either of his gratitude or his distress. By those, even disposed to treat with unhallowed levity the less praise-worthy parts of his character, the Psalmist is here allowed to have lent to friendship and sorrow all the pathos and dignity of which language is susceptible. And yet so simple are the words, and so natural the ideas they convey, that the heart of the rudest savage, or youngest child, would overflow with responsive emotion.

At what time of personal triumph and exaltation was this disastrous news communicated to David?

MARY. Just after he had slain the Amalekites, and brought back his wives and children to Ziklag. Mama, he must have been aware

whenever he saw a man with rent clothes, and earth on his head, that he had bad news to tell.

MAMA. Why so? what did these tokens indicate?

MARY. Excessive grief. You know Job's friends sat with him on the ground, and put dust on their heads, because of his afflictions—and the hypocritical Pharisees tore their clothes in pretended distress at our Lord's making himself God.

MAMA. And was the outward mourning of this Amalekite for the monarch *he* only pretended to have mercifully slain, a bit more real, or sincere than their's?

MARY. I suppose not; else he would never have made a merit of killing him. But how do we know he did not speak the truth?

MAMA. Because, well contrived and circumstantial as is his artful tale to obtain favour from Saul's presumed enemy—it is at variance with the inspired record of that unhappy monarch's self-murder which we read yesterday—with his avowed horror of dying by the hand of the "uncircumcised"—and with the subsequent suicide of Doeg; which is expressly said to have been occasioned by despair, at seeing his master dead before him. But providence having sent to the

fatal scene this stranger, for the apparent purpose of transmitting to David (ere the bodies were despoiled by the Philistines) the crown and other insignia, of a kingdom now rightfully his own—not content with this melancholy service, for which he would probably have been rewarded—Satan put it into his heart to arrogate to himself the supposed additional merit of having secured David's succession, by putting an end to the life of the late king.

MARY. David surely believed him at the time, though we know better; else he would not have ordered him to be slain.

MAMA. That he did, we may be sure, both from the execution itself, and from what he says on the subject elsewhere—when expressing his indignation at a similar crime. It was perhaps from some recantation of the disappointed traitor (disbelieved at the moment as the result of fear) that the true account of Saul's miserable end by his own hand was confirmed.

But was there anything, think you, of deceit or hypocrisy, in the deep sorrow evinced by David, for the race so disastrously slain by the enemies of Israel?

MARY. Oh! no. Even if David had not loved Jonathan so heartily, and grieved for the

death of the Lord's people—he was so good hearted that I am sure he would have mourned sincerely, even for Saul.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, such is the impression involuntarily left on our minds, by his constant generosity and tenderness, towards the most relentless and unprovoked of foes—that not one of his modern enemies has ever reproached him for blending, in one beautiful strain of pathetic lamentation, the name of Saul, with that of his far different son.

But before entering minutely on its beauties—let us pause a moment to trace, in an apparently irrelevant circumstance—the painful impression made on the mourner's mind, by the immediate cause of the death of Saul.

How came the king to be so disabled, as not to be able to effect his escape?

MARY. Because the archers hit him, "and he was sore wounded of the archers." Now I see Mama, why that verse (which I used to think had no business there) about David teaching "the men of Judah the use of the bow," comes in where it does, at the beginning of his lamentation.

MAMA. Yes, Mary; and the precaution so immediately taken, shews David at once in the

light of a wise king, and of a generously concerned foe.

By what name does he jointly apostrophize the fallen "mighty?"

MARY. "The beauty of Israel;"—you know, Mama, Saul was remarkably handsome, and Jonathan probably resembled him. At all events, he was beautiful, we are sure, in the eyes of David.

MAMA. And what feelings of patriotic and national concern, take precedence, in the pious mind of David, even of his own great personal loss, and sorrow?

MARY. The triumph and rejoicing of the Philistines, when it should come to be told in Gath and Askelon.

MAMA. Yes; but it is still as the "uncircumcised," that their victory and triumph, are especially galling to his pious spirit. Do you remember to whom he before applied the term?

MARY. Oh! yes, to Goliath, when he was yet a boy; but he had lived among them since.

MAMA. Not from choice, you will remember, nor longer than he could possibly help;—witness his pathetic exclamation, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar!"

But is it the heathen foes, of whose ferocity and ill-will he had personal experience, on whom he longs to visit the slaughter of his friends?

MARY. No; he wishes the very "mountains of Gilboa might want dew and rain, for witnessing their disgrace.

MAMA. Yes; for such the "casting away," in despair, of the "shield"—especially of a king, or leader,—was considered by all ancient nations. But as if ashamed of even the implied reflection, on the undoubted bravery of Saul, which his words might be held to convey,—he immediately adds to his well-earned tribute to the valour of Jonathan, "And the sword of Saul returned not empty." Nay, he combines, and as it were, embalms their joint memories, in one never-to-be forgotten verse;—expressive alike, of generous oblivion of injuries in the grave, and envy of their happiness in thus dying together.

MARY. That is very kind, and like David. But he surely could not think Saul had really been "lovely in his life."

MAMA. Seen through the vista of the tomb, Mary, there are few with whom we have been closely connected—whose failings, and even vices, do not come softened on our recollection. David did not forget that there was a period, (a brief one, alas!) when Saul, as the anointed of the

Lord, was "goodliest" among his brethren in Israel; or that, to his early patronage, he himself owed fame and distinction, and relationship to his beloved Jonathan; towards whom, at least, we have every reason to think, (from the influence enjoyed by the latter, over his mind, and his sacrificing to filial duty, even his love for David) Saul had generally shewn himself a kind and "pleasant" parent.

But, when the "daughters of Israel" have been summoned to weep, for the lost munificence of him, (whom they once offended, by exalting at his expense, the modest shepherd conqueror)—let us mark, how suddenly and naturally, the personal grief of David—long incumbered and repressed by images of fallen royalty,—breaks out into passionate exclamations at the mention of the name of Jonathan. What is it, in these few simple words, "I am distressed for thee, my brother,"—which makes them stir the heart, as if we too, had lost the friend of our bosom—one "pleasant" to ourselves, as the generous and devoted Jonathan?

MARY. Mama, I always feel ready to cry, when I read them, just as if I had known him. I suppose it is because the words are so very short and true.

MAMA. You have just felt,—as the youngest

perhaps, do most readily—that in truth and simplicity, lies the secret of that exquisite pathos, which has no parallel except in the Bible, and which all antiquity might be ransacked in vain to rival.

And as language would fail to add one pang to the grief which these four simple words have sufficed to convey to every feeling heart,—so would all the polish and refinement of modern times, strive in vain to add finish to a picture of friendship, whose tenderness and delicacy is carried to the uttermost, by being exalted beyond even female love and devotion.

And now, from the painful participation in a sorrow, which every one feels to be almost personal—it is a relief to escape once more into the vagueness of general regret, for the loss of the "valiant," and for national calamity. But I scarcely think I should have disturbed the current of emotions, so pleasing and profitable in their very pain, by any further reading to-day, had not our second chapter recorded a further testimony of the affectionate respect and regard of David, to the memory of his fallen foe.

By whom did we find the charitable office of interring the remains of Saul and his sons, to have been performed?

MARY. The "men of Jabesh Gilead." We have surely heard of them before, somewhere.

MAMA. That you have. We read together on a former occasion, of that signal deliverance from a cruel foe, which Saul wrought for them; and for which they now, at the distance of twenty years, shewed such proper and praise-worthy gratitude. They were threatened by a king of "Ammon," with the loss of their right eyes, if not relieved by a certain day; a fate from which they were rescued by the valour and promptitude of him, whose inanimate relics they now rescued from birds of prey, and wild beasts, and the yet more cruel indignities of cruel heathen foes.

How did David shew his sense of this kindness, and requite it, as done to himself?

MARY. He prayed for a blessing from God on them, and promised them his favour and protection; and told them not to be disheartened, because their master Saul was dead, and the people had anointed him king.

MAMA. Very distinctly told, and an incident honourable to all parties.

But what circumstance, more praise-worthy still, is recorded of David, at the beginning of this chapter?

MARY. He would not even choose a city out of his own tribe to live in, without enquiring of the Lord; and God told him to go to "Hebron." I always thought he reigned from the first at Jerusalem, but you told me it was a "Jebusite" town, till he took it long after.

MAMA. And till that event transferred the royal residence to the spot originally "chosen" by Jehovah, to "put his name there"—no place could have been more eligible for David's capital than "Hebron;" sanctified by the sepulchre of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and situated in the very midst of Judah, and in the possession of the family of those priests, who had long been among his most faithful and attached followers.

But though now reigning in undisputed sovereignty over his own tribe, did David step peaceably into the possession of the whole kingdom of Israel?

MARY. By no means, Mama. Abner took Ishbosheth, Saul's son, and made him king over a great many tribes,—indeed, I see it says, "all Israel."

MAMA. But,—even could any thing have justified Abner's setting up one of a rejected race, in opposition to the declared will of God, in anointing David,—was Ishbosheth the rightful successor to the crown of Saul?

MARY. I suppose he was, Mama; for you know Jonathan was dead, and two other sons of Saul besides; was this not the next heir?

MAMA. No; there yet lived one, whose claim to the crown by rightful inheritance was indisputable, viz.—Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan; though his tender age, (only five years,) and a lameness, contracted by a fall in the sudden flight of his nurse, unfitted him for seconding the ambitious views of Abner. Of David's kindness to this feeble and helpless offspring of his beloved friend, we shall hear amply hereafter.

But whither, in the meantime, did Abner or rather Saul's army, which still acknowledged him as its general, carry the usurping king?

MARY. To "Mahanaim." Where was that?

MAMA. A place beyond Jordan, famous in sacred history for the appearance of angels to Jacob; but most likely chosen by Abner for security both from the Philistines, and from David.

Did the army remain quietly there?

MARY. No. Abner and some of his men went to Gibeon, and met Joab and some of David's people; and Abner purposed that they should "play before them:" but it turned out any thing but play; for they all killed each other. Was it a piece of treachery in Abner, or did he *not* intend it?

MAMA. This is uncertain; but it is seldom that the martial sports of parties so hostile, end amicably; and the slaughter, (whether designed or accidental,) was the cause of a bloody battle, in which Abner and the men of Israel, the original promoters of the affair, were worsted.

But what individual on David's side, owed his fate to his own rashness and obstinacy?

MARY. One of the "sons of Zeruiah."

MAMA. And who was she?

MARY. David's sister, you told me before. Was this the same bold man who went with him into Saul's camp?

MAMA. No; that was "Abishai," the elder. But in daring, "Asahel" seems to have resembled him; and it is creditable to Abner, (Joab's determined foe and rival,) that he seems to have reluctantly inflicted a doom so recklessly provoked. He seems also to have felt anxious to put an end to the civil strife; of which, however, (as Joab's rather obscurely translated speech reminds him,) he had been the original cause. The result of the battle, we find from the numbers slain on both sides, to have been highly favourable to the party of David; which we learn from the following chapter,—(evidently belonging to, and closing the transactions of this)—"waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul weaker and weaker."

But there is a deeper lesson to be learned from the long and painful struggles by which it pleased God to exercise the faith and submission of him, whom twenty years before, he had anointed king over Israel. It may serve as an apt type of the gradual advance, amid trials and discouragements, of the Christian towards his heavenly crown. At times a desponding outcast from the kingdom to which, nevertheless, his "title standeth sure;" persecuted and harassed by the "prince of the world;" and even when partially put in possession of his purchased inheritance, still, amid fightings without and fears within," toiling his way in the might of the Lord his God towards the celestial Zion, where at length his reign shall be complete.

MORNING TWELFTH.

LESSON.—2d Samuel, Chapters iii. and iv.

MAMA. We shall have frequent and melancholy occasion, my dear Mary, to refer to the enumeration (no idle one) with which our reading commences, of the sons born to David, previous to, or during his sojourn at Hebron. These six young men, who,—had they been the offspring of one mother, and as such, brought up in fraternal union and concord, might have realized his own beautiful expression, that children "are like arrows in the hand of a giant," and that "happy is the man who hath his quiver full of them,"—were most of them destined, by their equally unnatural loves and hatreds—their domestic dissension, and rebellion against their common parent, to embitter, to the very uttermost, the declining years of David; and to become, in the hands of the Lord, the ministers of his predicted and merited chastisement. Of Amnon, and Absalom, and Adonijah, such were their various enormities, it might have been said, in the emphatic words of Job, "cursed be the day in which a man-child

stance, leads us to suppose she would gladly return from private life to be the sharer of a throne.

But what was the disastrous sequel to the feast which David made for Abner and his followers, in honour of Michal's restoration, and of his own tardy allegiance?

MARY. Joab, who had been away on an expedition, came back just as it was over, and Abner gone; and he pretended to send after him in the king's name, and took him aside "to speak with him quietly," and killed him, to revenge his brother Asahel. Mama! what a shocking piece of treachery!

MAMA. Yes, Mary—proceeding as it evidently did, far less from indignation at his brother's justly provoked fate in battle, than from selfish jealousy, and dread of the rising influence with David, of one so powerful as Abner. But where is now that boasted power? The man who could transfer at his pleasure, the allegiance of the tribes of Israel—five minutes conference with an unprincipled rival, sufficed to reduce to a heap of senseless clay. So weak are the instruments in themselves when their purpose is fulfilled—whom God makes use of, for the furtherance of his greatest designs!

Was the murder of their favourite general, per-

mitted to alienate from David, the returning affections of the Israelites?

MARY. No; they saw he had no hand in it, when he wished all manner of bad things on account of it, to Joab, his own sister's son. This was not right, was it?

MAMA. Imprecations of all kinds are utterly repugnant to our juster notions of christian love and forbearance; but nothing could be more shocking to an upright mind, than possible involvment in a crime so foreign to its nature as treachery; and David's name you know, had been used to betray Abner.

By what tokens, more honourable and becoming than curses, did David demonstrate the reality of his regret?

MARY. He made all the people, and even Joab—"rend their clothes, and put on sackcloth," and he himself followed the bier, and lifted up his voice, and wept for Abner.

But what does he mean by asking if he had "died as a fool dieth?" Was that because it was foolish of him to be taken in by Joab?

MAMA. The word "fool" here, my dear, as elsewhere applied by David, "the *fool* hath said in his heart there is no God"—means a wicked person, or transgressor; and if Abner had been such (David reasons) he would have justly died

the death of an evil-doer; whereas he fell—as the best and wisest may do—a victim to the envy of an assassin.

MARY. Oh! I understand this now. But I don't quite understand why the people came urging David to take meat; and were so pleased when he would not. What had they to do with it?

MAMA. It was a kind and considerate custom among the Jews, after a funeral, not only to visit the "the house of mourning," but even to carry provisions with them; in case the grief of the inmates should have led them to neglect their bodily wants. It forms a pretty and primitive incident in ancient manners, that this friendly solicitude should have been extended even to a king; and his declining to break, till sunset, the fast, which was a token of respect as well as sorrow for the memory of the deceased—confirmed the people's belief in the innocence of their beloved monarch; whose popularity we find was providentially increased, by the very event which threatened to overthrow it.

Take particular notice, Mary, of the complaint uttered, (at the very time of the guilt of Joab,) by his scarcely yet established sovereign, of his inability to punish as he deserved, his too powerful nephew; because it has been overlooked

when accusing of treacherous cruelty the recommendation given by David to Solomon, to visit this and his other crimes with that merited retribution, which, even now he predicts, was awaiting the "doer of evil, according to his wickedness," from the Lord.

But oh! Mary, how fertile a parent is crime! and how easily does one act of cowardly cruelty pave the way for another! No sooner did certain unworthy servants about the person of the son of Saul, learn that by the death of Abner, their master was deprived of his chief support, than they hastened to purchase, as they thought, the favour of David, by his assassination.

Who were these justly disappointed traitors?

MARY. They were "captains of bands," and ought to have been above murdering their master.

MAMA. But what circumstances of tribe and country, aggravated their guilt?

MARY. They were "Benjamites," and so were Saul, and Ishbosheth his son. Is that what you mean?

MAMA. Yes; and what has been considered yet more flagrant in their ingratitude, is that "Beeroth," their native city, was originally inhabited by Gibeonites; massacred and dispossessed by Saul, on purpose to make way for his favoured relations of "Benjamin."

In what defenceless state, did these recreant warriors surprise and slay their lord?

MARY. When he was lying on a bed at noon, in the heat of the day. Mama! the king of Moab, Eglon, was killed just at the same time; but he was a heathen tyrant, and the man that slew him a stranger, so it was not half so shocking. Why did these two people here pretend they were "fetching wheat?"

MAMA. It has been supposed they availed themselves of the pretext either of supplying the king's house with grain, or more probably, carrying some thence for the support of their soldiers; because a "sack" or bag, afforded the best means of conveying undiscovered their disgraceful trophy, the head of his rival, to the camp of David.

But did it produce there the expected effect?

MARY. Oh! no. David took God to witness, "who had redeemed him out of all his adversity," that as he had put to death the man who only pretended to have killed Saul, much more would he "take away from the earth" those who had "slain a righteous person, in his own house, on his bed." This was quite right of David. But why did he "cut off their hands and feet?"

MAMA. In compliance with an eastern cus-

tom, by which the offending members of criminals in the employ of the state, are still exposed before the palace gates, in Turkey and elsewhere. And never could this mark of reprobation be more justly put, than on the murder-stained hands, and "feet swift to shed blood," of these least pitiable of all conspirators.

Our reading to-day, Mary, has been of a dark and fearful complexion, a record of treachery and blood, unredeemed except by the genuine pity, and virtuous indignation of David.

To dwell on the former would be unprofitable; but the latter affords a striking and humiliating contrast to the subsequent feelings and conduct of one, whom a kingdom could not now bribe to connive at assassination, yet whom a temptation, incalculably less powerful, involved, a few short years after, in personal guilt of the same atrocious character. Oh! how should the admonition of "Be not high minded but fear," and "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," be impressed on our minds by the parallel between David, a mourner at the head of his late foe, and the executioner of the assassins of his rival in the kingdom—and the same David, availing himself of the known villainy of the "bloody son of Zeruiah," to devote to destruction his most faithful servant and soldier!

Let it be a sad but wholesome warning, that no original disposition, however noble and engaging, no instances of generosity, however splendid, secure the unaided "natural man" against the inroads of sin and Satan; when he who avenged murder in others by condemning them to wear the involuntary garb of mourning, lived to exclaim, in "sackcloth and ashes," "Lord, deliver *me* from blood guiltiness, and hide thy face from my sins!"

MORNING THIRTEENTH.

LESSON.—1st Chronicles Chapter xi. to verse 9. Chapter xii. from 23d verse. Chapter xiii.

MAMA. The passages, which the more than usual inversion in the order of events recorded in them, will oblige us to select and re-arrange from the chapters before us—contain three of the most important incidents in the history of David; viz. his elevation at Hebron to be king over all Israel—his conquest and occupation ofJerusalem—and his transfer to that place, of the ark of God, from Kirjath-jearim, where you know it had remained since its return from the hands of the Philistines.

The first event, in order of time, as well as of our reading, is the resort to him of the tribes, set at liberty from their allegiance, by the murder of Ishbosheth.

What was the consequence of this wicked action, so sincerely disapproved, and justly punished by David?

MARY. All Israel gathered themselves to

David to Hebron—saying, "Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh,"—and they remembered that even in Saul's time, he had "led them out," and that God had "appointed him to feed his people Israel."

MAMA. Yes; in that capacity of a good shepherd, with which his previous life had made him well acquainted; whose duty was not only to provide sustenance, but protection for the flock entrusted to his care—as had been early typified by his slaying (in the strength of his God) the lion and the bear.

By what solemn transaction was his public anointing—the former one in his father's house having been private—as king over Israel, preceded?

MARY. He "made a covenant with the elders of Israel, before the Lord." I suppose he promised to govern them well, and they in return, to serve him faithfully.

MAMA. Most probably; and so has this "covenant" been generally understood. But before passing on to the event, narrated in the next verse (though evidently subsequent to all the transactions at Hebron) let us finish these, by referring to the 23d verse of our second chapter; in which are specified the numbers of each tribe, who appeared on this memorable occasion, to

give in their adhesion to the new monarch of "all Israel"—or, in the more impressive language of scripture—to "turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord."

Of this enumeration—highly interesting in its details to the nation itself—we need notice only two or three remarkable particulars. First, how extremely inferior in point of mere numerical strength, were the children of Judah chosen by God, to afford a lawgiver to Israel—to the mighty armies sent forth by the tribes of Ephraim, Reuben, Ashur, and others, adhering till lately to the party of Saul—clearly proving that it was of the Lord alone, that one of the "least among the families of Israel," should by common consent, be elevated to rule over the rest. Nor was it less remarkable that this providential arrangement should be sanctioned by the presence and concurrence of the very kindred of Saul; while that monarch had yet a surviving grandson, in the person of the infant Mephibosheth.

But, to estimate aright the power and greatness of Him who could dispose this vast multitude to unite with "one heart" in fulfilling His design of making David king, we have only slightly to compute its numbers, amounting to upwards of two hundred and thirty thousand men, of different families and pursuits—separated by mountains, and

deserts, and rivers—but all trained to arms, and disciplined by perpetual wars to a perfect knowledge of their own strength. Well might David, in the exultation of his heart, spread before them a three-days' banquet, prepared by the liberality of their brethren, in commemoration of an event, by which their long fraternal strife was happily cemented, and (in the figurative language used by themselves at the beginning of our chapter) all the tribes at length united as "one fold, under one shepherd!" Well indeed might there be "joy in Israel" at a union so long deferred and desirable; and which none but Almighty power and wisdom were competent to bring about!

We must now revert to the first of our chapters, verse 4th, to follow up the important conquest, achieved by David and the yet undispersed armies of "all Israel," who had assembled to crown him at Hebron.

Was this latter the place originally fixed in the eternal counsels of God, for the seat of temporal and spiritual government over his people?

MARY. Oh! no; that was Jerusalem. No wonder David was anxious to take it, as soon as he possibly could, from the heathen Jebusites!

MAMA. And of what important part of it did he first obtain possession?

MARY. The castle of "Zion," where he after-

wards lived, so that it was called "the city of David." This was a particularly holy place, Mama, was it not?

MAMA. David so styles it, my dear, in prophetic words, when speaking in the person of the Almighty, "Thus have I set my king on my holy hill of Zion." But the peculiar sanctity to which you allude, is that which it has acquired, as the type and symbol of the purer church above, the "heavenly Zion," into which "nothing shall enter that defileth, or that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie;" though (like the literal Jerusalem) its precincts here below, are desecrated by a mixture of "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel."

How did these proud Canaanites defy the armies of the Lord, and his anointed, or (in the Psalmist's own expressive words), did the "heathen rage, and imagine a vain thing?"

MARY. They said he should not come into their town.

MAMA. Yes; and the parallel place of 2d Samuel, adds the insulting mockery, that the very "blind and lame" among them, should suffice to repel the besiegers. By whose valour was this idle boast signally falsified?

MARY. Joab, David's nephew. He "went up first," and was made "chief" for it, and repaired the rest of the city. But David, it says,

built "round about from Millo;" where was that?

MAMA. The situation of "Millo," an armoury or fortified building, subsequently erected by Solomon, is supposed to have been between Mount Zion, the residence of the kings, and Mount Moriah, the site of the temple; over the whole of which intervening valley, the town built by David, gradually spread.

But by whose gracious protection was he enabled thus to strengthen and extend his power?

MARY. "The Lord of Hosts was with him, and so he waxed greater and greater."

MAMA. And of this Almighty protector we have now to find proof (in the third of our chapters) that David was not unmindful. What was the first step taken by him to fulfil God's ancient purpose, of "putting his name" at Jerusalem?

MARY. He consulted all his "captains," and the "congregation," whether they should not gather all their brethren everywhere, to "bring again the ark of God."

MAMA. This was certainly the general purport of the consultation; but you have omitted two important and characteristic particulars;—see if you can pick them out.

MARY. Oh! yes, it was only to be done, "if it be of the Lord our God." That was like Da-

vid, who, I daresay, would "enquire of the Lord" before he did it. But what was the other thing you meant?

MAMA. The summoning of "priests and Levites," to preside at, and assist in the sacred office of removal; which could only by their ministry be lawfully accomplished.

Was the proposition agreeable to the people, as well as pleasing to God?

MARY. Yes, it was "right in all their eyes." It could hardly be otherwise, Mama.

MAMA. And yet, Mary, this same "people," so ready, when rightly guided, to acquiesce in the power and necessity of religion—had been content to remain in culpable ignorance of, and indifference to, their best interests, during the whole irreligious reign of Saul; at a distance from the symbol of God's visible presence, and destitute of the power of ascertaining His will. Let this teach *us* the inestimable value of those appointed means of grace, which bring, as it were, the "testimony" of God *home* to every heart and dwelling; from which, it is to be feared, without such gracious provision, the "form," as well as "power" of godliness would long since have passed away!

Where had the ark of "God the Lord, that dwelleth between the cherubim," remained, dur-

ing the dark and disastrous period, now about to give place to happier times?

MARY. At "Kirjath-jearim," you know; where the Philistines sent it home in such a hurry; and David, and all Israel, went there to fetch it; and it says they "played before God, with all their might, and with singing, and harps, and trumpets."

MAMA. So far, all was piety and joy. But by what grievous omission in the appointed order of march, was the solemn procession "troubled," and the general rejoicing converted into terror and mourning?

MARY. The ark was put upon a "new cart," and when the oxen "stumbled," and one of the men that drove it, put out his hand to hold it steady, God was angry and slew him. Mama! pray make this plain, for it has often puzzled me. The Philistines sent home the ark in a cart drawn by "milch-kine," and nothing happened.

MAMA. To the ignorant heathens, acting to the best of their judgment, nothing certainly. But have you forgotten the Bethshemites slain to the number of seventy, for unauthorized curiosity, in "looking into" the ark, sacred as *they* ought to have known, to the priests of God alone. Had these, as well as the Levites, whose special

office it was, to bear aloft on their shoulders, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, been employed (as David's intended summons led us to expect) in its removal—the threatened accident which occasioned the apparently innocent officiousness of Uzza, would never have occurred. Do you know who the youth, who thus became an expiatory victim for the transgression of God's law, was?

MARY. No; not a priest or Levite of course, else he would not have been "cut off."

MAMA. He was one of the sons of "Abinadab," whose "house on the hill" near Kirjathjearim, had now for forty-six years been hallowed by the residence of the ark of God; and brother to Eleazar (perhaps now no more) who had originally been "sanctified," we are told, or set apart, for its peculiar care. From him, or from the prophet Samuel, who only about twenty years before, had presided at a solemn fast, observed before the exiled "Testimony of Israel"—the rash young man, who put forth his hand to an unauthorised office, might have learned deeper impressions of its awful sanctity.

MARY. So he might, Mama; and at all events David must have known better. I wonder he could be "displeased" at any thing God did!

MAMA. There is surely nothing, my dear, in

the mention of this displeasure (which has scandalized others besides yourself) to lead us to think it was sinfully directed against Him who "cannot err." David, from what we know of him, was far more likely to be "*grievously vexed*" (which is what the word implies) with *himself*, as the indirect author of the sin, and its consequent judgment. And that such *were* his natural feelings of mingled awe and humiliation on the occasion, may, I think, be distinctly gathered from his relinquishment (as unworthy) of his fond design of triumphantly bearing to his own home, a symbol too sacred to allow unhallowed contact. I never can look on this change in the purposes of David, by which one of the proudest objects of his life was temporarily frustrated, in any other light than that of a penitent sacrifice for not having, as a monarch, enforced more strictly the known law of God. This will be fully corroborated (if not proved) by his altered conduct on its next removal.

Where was it, in the meantime, humbly deposited?

MARY. At the house of "Obed-Edom, the Gittite." Who was he?

MAMA. A Levite, and as such, an authorized guardian of the sacred symbol. By what gracious token was the temporary appointment ratified?

MARY. The Lord "blessed Obed-Edom, and

all that he had," the three months that the ark remained with him.

MAMA. Let us learn, my dear child, from this consoling expression, that he who, in vindication of his honour, is mighty to punish, is no less mighty, and far more willing, to bless. For the violated sanctity of the law of God, one only, the transgressor himself, suffered; while, to mark (when duly reverenced) its healing and benignant character, blessings were showered on a whole privileged household. If thus it was with the "two tables of stone," containing the strict and unbending precepts of the Mosaic covenant—how much more will the blessed Gospel, received and cherished in the heart, shed abroad there a peace, a joy, and a blessedness, before which, the temporal prosperity of Obed-Edom, great as it was, must sink into nothing!

MORNING FOURTEENTH.

LESSON—1st Chronicles, Chapter xv.—Psalm lxviii.—1st Chronicles, Chapter xvi.

MAMA. I think we shall have cause to see and acknowledge, in the beginning of this day's reading, not only the justice of the view I adopted, of the penitential feelings of David under God's recent chastisement, but the truth of my former observations on the immediate and practical reformation by which his errors, both public and private, were uniformly followed.

By what increase of respect and considerateness (independently of the acknowledgement of the exclusive right of the Levites to be its bearers) do we find his second intended removal of the ark characterised?

MARY. He "prepared a place" now, Mama, and "pitched a tent" for it.

MAMA. Highly proper, and indeed indispensable preliminaries, since—partly from remaining awe, and more probably from his now formed design of building a permanent temple—he still

declined conveying it, as once intended, to his own palace.

Having assembled on this second occasion, not only, as before, "all Israel"—but the children of Aaron and the Levites, according to their appointed families—what pious injunction does he lay on them for the future, and in what humble terms does he acknowledge and deplore the past?

MARY. He bade them "sanctify themselves," that they might "bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel;" and said, it was because they "had not done it at the first, nor sought God after the due order," that he had "made a breach upon them."

MAMA. Bear in mind, my dear, these solemn words, if ever, in these times of change and innovation, you should hear the "sanctification" of God's ministers, and that "due order" in their ministrations, the omission of which called forth a summary judgment, characterized as things of little moment.

The Mosaic ritual, it is true, has had its use, and passed away; but grievously are they mistaken, who suppose, that with it has passed away, "one jot or tittle," of the reverence due to, or exacted by the Majesty of Heaven! Nay, if the sacredness of the preparatory law, which "came by the ministry of angels," was so awfully and uniformly vindicated,—is it to be imagined,

that the "word of life," which, in latter times, was "spoken by the Son of God," is to be rashly tampered with, by unauthorized hands—or propped, when in supposed jeopardy, by unhallowed expedients?

Of the insufficiency of such to give it support, in the eyes at least, of the pious David—we have a striking acknowledgement in the 26th verse, to which (passing over the enumeration of the singers and musicians) we may now turn. What is there devoutly said of the succour and strength vouchsafed by God to his appointed servants?

MARY. "And it came to pass, when *God helped the Levites* that bare the ark of the covenant, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams."

MAMA. Yes; in grateful acknowledgement of that Almighty guidance and protection, which not only directed and supported their toilsome steps, with their precious burden, along the steep craggy ascent to Zion,—but preserved them during the progress, from any participation in, or repetition of the guilt of Uzza. In a similar spirit, Mary, does every pious minister, still ascribe to the grace and mercy of his God, not only the success with which it may please that God to crown his labours,—but his own preservation from being carried away by the errors

peculiar to his calling, and his guidance in that "path of life," from which, even while pointing it out to others, some have themselves been fatally estranged.

For what striking visible symbol of purity and sacredness, did the sacred Psalmist of Israel, in token of humility, exchange his usual robes of state; while joining, or more probably leading, the choir of Levites employed in the praises of God?

MARY. "A robe of fine linen, and a linen ephod." Could any but priests wear these?

MAMA. Not on ordinary occasions, certainly; but the assumption of them in this instance, by David, so far from indicating pride or presumption, was evidently directed by a far nobler feeling,—that of testifying in how much higher honour, he held the character of the humblest servant of God, than that of the mightiest earthly monarch. And this humility it was, (indicated by his relinquishment for the day, of his royal trappings) which so outraged the pride, and provoked the contempt of Saul's haughty daughter; and gave rise, from her scornful comments recorded in the parallel place of the book of Samuel—to the unfounded jests of infidel blasphemers, on the supposed "nakedness" and shameless exposure of David while leading the choral dance.

in honour of that very Being, by whose ceremonial law even accidental indecorum during sacred ordinances, was strictly guarded against—and who, we cannot for a moment doubt, would have avenged any such profanation, by a judgment more terrible still, than the recent one on Uzza.

And now, Mary, studiously as I have refrained, during our conversations, from availing myself, otherwise than indirectly, of the writings of the many learned persons, whose able comments might, perhaps have advantageously superseded your mother's desultory remarks—I think it would be cruel to deprive you of the gratification I have myself received, from the adaptation, by a skilful expositor, of the 68th Psalm, (expressly called in its title, "A prayer in removing the ark,") to the successive stages of its journey, to its ultimate rest in Zion.

Little, perhaps, did those who originally subjoined to many of the delightful hymns of David, the *then* well-known occasions on which they were composed,—imagine the extent of obligation under which they were laying worshippers like ourselves, of a distant age; by the enhanced pleasure and edification, arising from beholding the interesting events of the life of the writer, reflected, as it were, in the yet more interesting

mirror of these pious and affecting compositions.

Let us turn then, in the first place, to the 68th Psalm, and mark the peculiar adaptation of its very commencement, to the occasion for which it was composed, viz. the removal of the ark. Are you aware that the precise words with which it opens, had acquired—from consecration for ages to the same hallowed office—a peculiar sacredness?

MARY. No, Mama. What made them so proper and holy?

MAMA. Their express use by Moses, the inspired lawgiver of God's people, every time, when, during their protracted wanderings, the ark of His glory was lifted up for removal, by its appointed bearers. And it is characteristic of the humility, as well as piety of David, that he should now have adopted these words of ancient sanctity, in preference to the loftiest flights of his own more recent inspiration. How indicative, too, of the true spirit of religion, is the lead here given (as in the unrivalled prayer of his illustrious "Seed") to fervent aspirations for the advancement of the glory and honour of Jehovah's kingdom and devout acknowledgements of his universal and particular providence!

These extending to the 7th verse, are supposed to have been sung during the preliminary adjust-

ment of the ark, on the shoulders of the Levites; while, on the commencement of the procession, followed the more exclusively national praises, for rescue from Egyptian bondage, and guidance through the wilderness, contained in the noble words, "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march in the wilderness, the earth shook, the heavens dropped at the presence of God; even Sinai itself, was moved at the presence of God—the God of Israel."

Could any expressions be selected, more suitable to revive the dormant gratitude for deliverance of a too forgetful people, and deepen their reverence for its long neglected national symbol?

MARY. No, indeed, Mama; I shall always care much more for this psalm, now that I know when David made it.

MAMA. That, my dear, you might have "known" long since, from the title it bears in your Bible. But that its minute application to so grand an event, as the triumphant inauguration of the "King of kings," by a whole awakened people,—should lend it fresh interest in your eyes, is the object of my thus, I hope inseparably, associating them in your memory.

These appropriate references to the benefits conferred by the ark, in its former "journey-

ings," are supposed to have lasted till the procession came in view of Mount Zion, its chosen and future residence; where commenced the equally appropriate strains, exalting (at verse 15th) that highly favoured "hill," above those hitherto most conspicuous in Israel, and rebuking their supposed envy at its superior distinction; the word, to "leap," applied to them, being said more correctly to express "couching" in malice or revenge, like exasperated beasts of prey.

The succeeding verses, beginning, "Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive," &c. &c. are by many supposed to indicate the period of the actual ascent of the ark to the "holy mountain;" and were this the only "song of Zion," unanimously referred by the church, to the same joyful occasion,—the conjecture would be abundantly probable. But, descriptive as is the whole residue of this psalm, in the highest degree, of the present solemnity, (to the very minute details of the relative position in the sacred procession, of the singers, musicians, and "damsels with the timbrels," and the selection for enumeration, of four tribes, two of them the nearest, and two others the most remote from Jerusalem, by which the national unanimity is finely intimated) I think you will agree with me in regarding, as still mo[redacted]

cable to the entrance of the symbol of God's presence, into its appointed "rest," that noble hymn, the 24th psalm.

In this sublimest of human compositions, not only is the literal exaltation of the ark of God, to the "hill of the Lord," plainly alluded to,—but the spiritual qualifications of those aspiring to worship before it, beautifully set forth. And then, when with "clean hands, and a pure heart," it had been reverently borne thither—are the "gates" of the destined sanctuary—called upon to receive their Lord—in a strain of heavenly eloquence, which (especially when accompanied then, as in our own times, with solemn and appropriate harmony) thrills the very soul, and has made many a devout worshipper ready to exclaim, with Jacob, while listening to the angelic choir,—"Surely this is none other but the house of God, this is the gate of heaven!"

MARY. I always thought the beautiful words, "Lift up your heads, ye everlasting doors, and let the King of Glory come in," were written by David about Christ.

MAMA. I am the more glad you thought so, that the supposition is perfectly just, and recognised by the whole Christian church. The same may be said, with even greater force, of that part of the 68th psalm, about "leading captivity

captive, and receiving gifts for men." But you are not now to learn, that the primary application of many Scripture prophecies, among others those in the Psalms, to events either present or less remote, does not in the least affect their ultimate reference to higher and more spiritual objects.

When David, in the warmth of parental partiality for his son Solomon, described his future reign, in colours too glowing far, for mortal domination,—he as little thought, perhaps, that he was unconsciously describing the King who was to "sit upon his throne, for ever and ever;"—as that when now celebrating the ascent of the ark, he was furnishing a song of future triumph, for the "ascension" of his glorified "Seed." Though the remarkable expression, (quoted to this very effect, by Christ himself, from one of the psalms) "The Lord said unto *my Lord*, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool," shews that David at times was favoured with prophetic glimpses of the real character and greatness of his illustrious descendant.

To Him, and to his victories, and their triumphant result above, and inexpressible purchased blessings here below, let us habitually refer the many passages in the hymns we so much admire,

which plainly transcend human might, or human exaltation. And let it deepen our gratitude, to reflect that the glory which David saw "afar off," and "through a glass darkly"—has in these latter times, been revealed, in its full brightness and benignity, to the humblest partakers in the "gifts received for men" by that conqueror, who has only "ascended up on high," to prepare for them a way to the Zion above.

We have left ourselves little leisure to notice minutely, the festal sacrifices offered by the gratitude of David, when the translation of the ark was happily accomplished,—the generous liberality to the poor, by which they were accompanied,—the yet more praiseworthy appointment of a permanent choir, to celebrate continually the praises of God,—or even the beautiful hymn, (chiefly compiled from the 96th, 105th, and 106th psalms) which David, on this joyful day, delivered to the chief singer Asaph—himself a distinguished proficient in sacred poetry. Its appropriateness to the occasion—eloquent appeals to the gratitude and feelings of the people—and reiterated expressions of heart-felt piety and praise—carry with them their own best commentary; and must find an echo in every heart, either duly instructed in the special providences towards Israel, to which it refers, or the more marvellous

spiritual deliverance, of which their rescue was but a foretaste and a type.

Nor was the devotion thus expressed by David, left behind him, (as is the case with too many) on quitting the immediate presence of God. In what affecting words, is the whole account of this public commemoration closed?

MARY. "And David returned to bless his house."

MAMA. Yes, Mary; not only to bless it with his presence, as a wise and lenient governor, but (in the well known scripture meaning of the phrase) to conclude, by presiding over the domestic worship of his family, the public services of the sanctuary; thus leaving an example which all, while they admire, may imitate. Few are privileged to erect, like David, a "tabernacle" for the reception of the visible presence of God; but under the humblest roof where "two or three are gathered together in his name, He has promised to be "in the midst of them;" and with such a promise vouchsafed, who would not resolve at once to make it his, and thus bring, like the pious monarch of Israel, a blessing on his house?

MORNING FIFTEENTH.

LESSON—1st Chronicles, Chapter xvii. 2d Samuel, Chapter 9th and 10th.

MAMA. The close of our yesterday's reading furnished an exemplary proof that the fervent devotion of David did not evaporate with the public solemnity, by which it was called forth. And we have, in the beginning of that of to-day, the result of those pious meditations with which it was still farther followed up.

Did the grateful monarch of Israel rest satisfied with having provided at length, a temporary shelter for the long exiled ark of God?

MARY. No. He was ashamed of dwelling in "an house of cedars" while it yet remained "under curtains." What did that mean, Mama?

MAMA. I should have sooner explained it, had I not imagined that you were sufficiently acquainted with the import of the word "tabernacle," to be aware that it was merely a superior and more ornamented species of tent; capable, like those, of being taken down, and folded up for removal, and speedily re-erected—admirably

adopted therefore for the migratory state of the ark and people of God in the wilderness—though now, in David's opinion, sadly inadequate and unsuited to the settled condition of Israel, both in church and state.

To whom did he communicate these pious misgivings?

MARY. To Nathan the prophet, who at first encouraged him,—the thing seemed so right and reasonable.

MAMA. Yes, Mary; though for wise reasons, dispensed with and over-ruled by God. Let us remark—as honourable to the veracity of Nathan (the supposed author of the second book of Samuel where the transaction is similarly recorded) and as a fresh instance of the strict truth which pervades all the narrations of the Bible—the candour with which the prophet relates the Almighty's revocation of the sanction he had rashly, and in mere human wisdom, pronounced?

What reasons was He pleased to assign for denying to David the gratification of his pious wishes?

MARY. That He had "not dwelt in an house, since the day He brought up Israel," but gone from tent to tent, and tabernacle to tabernacle." How was this Mama? I thought Moses made only one.

MAMA. Your question will afford us an example of the great utility of comparing parallel places of Scripture, and of the invaluable references in the margin of our Bibles—by which we are directed to the original words of 2d Samuel, and find there, "a tent *and* a tabernacle"—merely signifying (as both are *identical*) the pleasure of Jehovah to dispense hitherto, with a fixed earthly habitation.

Does such appear, however, to have been the continued purpose of Him whom the "Heaven of heavens cannot contain?"

MARY. No; for he says, to comfort David, that after his death, his son should "build Him an house." One cannot help wishing it had pleased God to let David do it, after taking him from the "sheep cote," and shewing him so much favour! Have you any idea why it was not allowed?

MAMA. When we have only conjectures, Mary, to guide us, in speculating on the decrees of Omnipotence—we cannot be too careful in hazarding them. One natural supposition, however—borne out by some hints of Scripture—is, that the perpetual wars and bloodshed, amid which the life of David was necessarily passed, unfitted him for that lengthened work of piety and peace, for the furtherance of which the enemies of Israel,

during his son's more pacific reign, were miraculously restrained and subdued. But a sadder, and more obvious ground of unfitness, suggests itself to the heart of every one acquainted with the deplorable sequel of David's history; from which (had the omniscient Being to whom it was already present, seen meet *then* to reveal it by the mouth of his prophet) the king would, in his present holy frame, have recoiled, exclaiming like Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?"

Be this as it may, the promises made, in reward of his hitherto unswerving allegiance to David—were such as amply to compensate for his disappointment; and fill his pious soul with overflowing gratitude.

What magnificent things are said of the unborn son, destined to fulfil, in due time, his father's accepted intention?

MARY. God was to "stablish his throne for ever"—and to "be his father and he should be his son"—and "settle him in his house and kingdom for ever."

MAMA. In whose "house and kingdom," Mary, (for your change of persons from the text, renders it doubtful)—David's? or the Lord's, who was then speaking?

MARY. Ah! I see it was God's. Surely this

could not mean Solomon only; as he is dead long ago, and no king of his family reigns now at Jerusalem.

MAMA. I am glad you perceived this, and the distinction between the temporal mercies abundantly showered on Solomon—and the eternal Sonship, and everlasting kingdom reserved for him, of whom it can alone be truly said thus he sitteth "on the throne of David, (his father, "according to the flesh,") for ever." Into the greatness of this mystery, the king, it is probable, was not yet permitted to penetrate. Yet how do his profuse, and heart-felt expressions of gratitude for mere temporal benefits conferred on himself and family, shame the cold reluctant acknowledgements of the Christian for richer mercies and a more enduring kingdom!

Whither did he instantly repair, to pour out these pious and praiseworthy feelings?

MARY. It says, he went, and "sat before the Lord." Did the Jews not kneel at their devotions, as we do?

MAMA. Probably not; as we hear chiefly in Scripture, of prostration on the face, in the more solemn periods of prayer; and the posture now assumed by the outwardly irreverent modern Jews, is standing. But this one here assigned to David is, according to the customs of the East,

at this day—abundantly expressive of humilit and adopted by inferiors whenever their stay in superior's presence becomes too long to admit continued prostration. It is in fact, a half kne ing position; the knees being joined togeth and the weight of the body resting on the heel

But what assures us that it was not in postu alone, that David humbled himself before God

MARY. He says, "Who am I, O Lord Go and what is mine house, that thou hast broug me hitherto?" Indeed he might well ask th Mama, since (as God reminded him) he had be a poor shepherd boy, with no more chance of kingdom than I have.

MAMA. And when in addition to that perso al aggrandizement—sometimes conferred by v lour or other circumstances, on obscure individua in the East—he saw his honours rendered by t promise of God, not only hereditary but perpe ual—how does a sense of undeserved favour swe and oppress his labouring heart, and oblige hi to refer to the knowledge of that heart possess by his Almighty Benefactor—for the feelin *there*, to express which, words were denied!

And oh! Mary, what a beautiful absence selfishness is displayed in the readiness wi which one so highly honoured, soon turns fro the contemplation of individual to that of natio

al benefits,—finding, like Moses, in the "good of his nation," his most congenial subject of exultation: subordinate only, as in the mind of Moses and every *truly* religious man, to the yet more paramount consideration, of the honour likely to accrue from all, to God!

How is this absorbing sentiment beautifully expressed at verse 24th?

MARY. "That thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, the Lord of Hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel." Oh Mama! how good and right David's thoughts seem to be, since we took them to pieces so. I am not at all surprised he is called a "man after God's own heart," now that I know him better.

MAMA. And I shall be disappointed, if some measure at least, of this premature conviction, does not survive the knowledge (to which we are sadly advancing) of his painful backslidings. One inference at least, may be drawn from your unsophisticated avowal, viz. that if more intimate knowledge of his recorded words and actions has heightened your appreciation of the cruelly misrepresented king of Israel—the eye of Omnipotence may surely be permitted, unquestioned, to have discerned in him matter for compassion and even for acceptance, unrevealed (till the day when the

"secrets of all hearts shall be judged") to the unpitying revilers of a sinner like themselves.

But what amiable *trait* of David's conduct occurs, in the second of our chapters, to confirm, if (as I suspect) it did not partly influence, your favourable estimate of his natural disposition?

MARY. His asking, as soon as he was fairly settled at Jerusalem, whether there was any one left of *Saul's* house, to whom he might "shew kindness, for Jonathan's sake." Surely, Mama, he could not have known of Mephibosheth; else he would have been good to *him*, as Jonathan's child, from the first?

MAMA. Evidently not. For as we perceive, this feeble scion of a royal stock had hitherto remained in a distant retreat; the same probably to which his faithful nurse had fled with him, on the catastrophe of his family.

To whom did David, as yet in ignorance of the existence of one so endeared to him by hereditary friendship—apply, for the purpose of shewing gratuitous kindness to the house of his deceased enemy?

MARY. A servant of Saul's called Ziba, and he first told him of Mephibosheth. How glad David must have been!

MAMA. Yes, Mary, at once to fulfil a solemn engagement, entered into with his beloved and

departed friend, and to extend his royal protection to one so interesting and helpless.

MARY. Mama! how striking, to see Saul's grandson falling on his face before David; and calling himself, out of humility, a "dead dog," just as David had done, years before, when speaking to Saul in the cave! It was quite right of him to make Jonathan's son eat at his own table, to shew his respect for his father's memory.

MAMA. To you and me, Mary, this seems only an act of natural and almost unavoidable courtesy. But if we consider for a moment the extreme jealousy with which, in eastern countries to this day, individuals even remotely connected with the throne, are regarded by him who fills it, and the wholesale massacres (amidst which mutilation, loss of eyes, and imprisonment for life are considered acts of clemency) involving often, like that of wicked Athaliah, "all the seed royal" of those unhappy lands—we shall more highly estimate the generosity which placed daily in view of the Jewish people, and on an apparent footing of equality with their *elective* monarch, the last scion of the once popular family of Saul.

But was the "kindness of God," as (from its having been ratified by an oath before Him) that shewn by David to Mephibosheth is beautifully

called—confined to an affectionate reception, and a place at the king's table?

MARY. Oh no! David handsomely gave him back all the land that had been Saul's, and I suppose, because he was young, and lame, and not able to manage it properly, appointed Ziba to do it for him. This was really considerate, as well as kind.

MAMA. It was certainly thus intended; though the basest advantage was afterwards taken by this "unjust steward," to calumniate his absent lord, and secure the inheritance for himself. From what may we gather that he was already too powerful for a servant, and too probably enriched on the ruins of his late master's family?

MARY. It says he had "fifteen sons, and twenty servants." I fear they were too many for poor cripple Mephibosheth; but while he had the king's favour, no one could hurt him.

MAMA. No; and accordingly it was not till David was involved in his own misfortunes, that he became the victim of Ziba's treachery, as we shall see by and bye.

Besides weighter reasons for including in this day's reading, the next short chapter—I the more willingly do so, that it records another pleasing instance of David's friendly ac[redacted]

ledgement of past kindness. Towards whom was it manifested?

MARY. The son of Nahash, king of the Ammonites. How came David to have any thing to do with him?

MAMA. Scripture affords no precise answer to your question, which is the more natural, as the Ammonites were enemies to God's people, and Nahash, (if the same who so cruelly threatened the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead) a relentless tyrant. We perceive however, in the very defeat which he sustained on that occasion, at the hands of Saul—a likely motive to induce him to grant protection to David, while an exiled fugitive; and this was the "kindness" probably, of which he retained so creditable a recollection.

But what reception did his embassy of condolence experience from the young king of Ammon?

MARY. His people persuaded him they were 'spies,' and they used them ridiculously; shaving off half their beards, and cutting their clothes short. I think Mama, the people who did it, had more reason to be "ashamed" than David's men.

MAMA. You are not aware perhaps, of the prodigious importance, nay, almost sanctity of the "beard" in eastern countries; among the Jews especially, who were strictly forbidden to "mar its corners," even in token of grief for

their nearest relations; and who, you see, here religiously abstained from taking off even the remaining portions, by which they were temporarily disfigured. As for the extent of the other affront, you would better estimate it, did you know how excessively scandalized Turks and other orientals are, to this day, by what they esteem the "shamefulness" of the Franks' short clothing, to wear which themselves would appear to them the depth of folly and degradation.

MARY. I understand now why they were so highly affronted. But what is meant by the children of Ammon seeing that they "stank" before David?

MAMA. That they had rendered themselves so justly odious and abhorrent to him, as to have no alternative but a bloody war; for a cause (their own conscience must have told them) the most idle and disgraceful. But what was the result of the great armament of "Syrians" and others whom they mustered in this unrighteous quarrel?

MARY. They were all defeated, and forty thousand killed; and the end of it was, that people were afraid to take their part any more, and David came out of it greater than ever.

MAMA. We have given a glance, though a cursory one, to this chapter, because with it con-

cludes that happy era, (to which, alas! we must now bid adieu) during which David, as is said of good old Zechariah, "walked in the commandments and ordinances of God blameless;" and when, as Job says of himself, during a similar privileged period—the "candle of the Lord shined on his head." Twenty years now had David reigned and prospered, subduing in the name and strength of his God, all his foreign enemies; uniting under his "righteous sceptre" the long scattered tribes of Israel; and (a brighter jewel still in his yet unstained crown)—"holding fast his integrity," "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with his God." We have now to learn, and seldom has the lesson been written in characters more bitter and humiliating—that "man in his own estate, is altogether vanity," that "there is none righteous, no not one," and that the heart (in its best natural condition) is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." All these humbling representations of humanity, (some of them his own,) David lived to verify. May we have cause to apply to the moral and spiritual effect on others of his sad miscarriage, the text which cheered the apostle under the lamentable apostacy of his beloved nation, "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, how much more their fulness?" Then,

may we humbly ask, if the lapse into sin of David be held up, as it justly is, as a beacon to Christians of all ages—may not his exemplary contrition become a pattern and encouragement to many, in the difficult but not impracticable path, of "repentance unto life?"

MORNING SIXTEENTH.

LESSON.—2d Samuel, Chapters xi. Psalm xxxviii.

MARY. Mama! I quite dreaded coming to read to-day, after what you said (and not without reason) about David's becoming wicked. How *could* he go so dreadfully wrong all at once?

MAMA. If you had followed, my dear, with the solemn attention with which it becomes us, ever to approach the darker and more painful chapters of the history of man as recorded in the Bible—the whole progress of this unhappy narration, you would have been aware that it was not "*at once*" that David proceeded to the utmost lengths of crime and cruelty; but that to one, apparently trivial act of indulgence in sinful curiosity, might be traced all the successive steps of an iniquity, from the consummation of which he would probably at its earlier stages, have himself shrunk with horror.

This is perhaps (to the young especially) the most instructive part of the sad history; and a

practical comment on the scripture remark, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth;" and its yet more impressive admonition, to "resist the beginnings of evil."

To what unfortunate circumstance might the sinful passion of David for the wife of another (whom, according to the strict customs of the east regarding women, he would never otherwise have been permitted to behold) be attributed?

MARY. To his seeing her bathing, while walking on the roof of his house.

MAMA. And can any thing be more obvious than that, by the very trifling act of self-denial and sacrifice to decorum, of ceasing to take advantage of his elevated position to invade the privacy of a respectable woman, who concluded herself perfectly safe from observation the whole future tide of guilt and misery would have been cut off, as it were, at its very source?

But truly may it be said of "sin" as of "strife," that it is "as when one letteth out water,"—so rapidly and irresistibly does its flood increase, and at length sweep all before it!

MARY. Mama! I wonder, since David was wicked enough to covet another man's wife, and liked her so well, that he did not take her from her husband and keep her altogether. Saul took his daughters from their's, and gave them to other

men, and Herod married his own brother's wife; and I daresay nobody would have hindered David from doing as he chose.

MAMA. I will tell you what hindered him. Not the "fear of God," for "*He*" evidently was not "in all his thoughts,"—but the fear of man. He was restrained by regard for his reputation as a godly person; and a strict observer of that Divine law, which he shrunk from openly violating, even while breaking in secret one of its most awful precepts. Mark this principle well at the outset; because in the attempt to reconcile his conduct as a sinner, with his established character as a professor of holiness, lies the only solution of the seeming fatality which impelled David to add crime to crime, from the vain hope of screening his own reputation, and that of the partner of his guilt. Uriah's may be the first recorded murder, unwillingly perpetrated for purposes of concealment: but thousands have been since committed on the same principle, by those who once shuddered, like David, at "blood-guiltiness," and at first contemplated no blacker sin than robbery.

Had David been a tyrant, regardless of God and man, like Saul, or Herod, he would no doubt have openly possessed himself of the sacred pledge, left to the safe keeping of his king and country

by its absent defender. But though not afraid to "do this great wickedness, and sin before God;" he was afraid of the "reproach of men," either on himself or the poor victim of his unhallowed passion. Nay, more, as a zealous upholder of the strictness of the law of Moses, he durst not take upon him to screen her by his power, from the dreadful sentence to which it condemned her; and the execution of which, the high sense of the honour of Uriah, leads us to suppose he would have exacted. What was the punishment decreed by God on the convicted adultress?

MARY. Oh! Mama! she was to be stoned to death. You know the Jews in our Lord's time wanted to do so to a poor creature, and he would not let them.

MAMA. Nay, Mary; if our blessed Saviour, compassionate as he was, yet "obedient unto the law," and "fulfilling all righteousness," no farther exercised his absolving power in the poor sinner's favour, than by an appeal to the consciences of her self-convicted accusers—no wonder the earthly king, "set up" by God, expressly to maintain and enforce his law, durst not openly take the transgressor's part.

His great object thus became, to procure, if possible, (by any means, however disgraceful,) for the erring wife, the countenance of her uncon-

scious husband; and had this been accomplished, the outward necessity for removing him by murder would have been obviated.

But would the bloody purpose have been the less surely recorded in the "book of *His* remembrance," who hath said that "whosoever hateth his brother in his heart, is a murderer already?" Doubtless not; and whether the injured husband had been worked upon to go to his house, which, from the most honourable and conscientious motives, he declined, or not—the stain of "blood-guiltiness," would equally, in the sight of God, have cleaved to the soul of David. His chastisement and penitence might not, however, in the former case, have been so edifyingly displayed in the eyes of men; and, therefore, no doubt his guilt was permitted to assume the hideous and visible shape of treacherous and deliberate assassination.

MARY. Mama! It makes me sick! I had far rather David had done like Saul, and "cast a javelin" at once at good Uriah, than put him in front of the battle, and bid them leave him to be killed.

MAMA. I do not wonder, Mary, at your youthful preference of cruelty over treachery. But alas! David's base expedient included both. Let us pause a moment, to mark the dreadful conse-

quences of persons in power being surrounded by instruments, apt and willing to second their evil purposes.

Had David, after the murder of Abner, courageously rid himself, in the strength of his God, of the powerful, but blood-thirsty "son of Zeruiah," Joab would not now have been at hand, to comprehend and execute, with all a villain's alacrity, the shameful commission given him by the king.

I do not know that throughout the whole course of this humiliating history—no, not even when Nathan says unto David, "Thou art the man," I ever feel so strongly the fathomless depth of his degradation, as when his base colleague in crime knows that he may triumphantly screen his own mismanagement of the siege, and consequent loss of life to God's people, by the bare mention of that piece of coveted intelligence,—"Thy servant Uriah, the Hittite, is dead also!"

"Thy servant!" oh, Mary! what a volume of undesigned reproach is there in that one word! The most tried and faithful of David's warriors—the sympathizing soldier, who, while his brethren of the army were exposed to hardships, denied himself the permitted comforts of his own house and home—the pious man, who (though an alien by birth from Israel) shrunk from ease and luxu-

ry, while the ark of God shared the perils of the distant camp—*he* it was, whom the same David, whose conscience smote him for cutting off even a fragment of the robe of Saul—coolly betrayed to the sword of the enemies of God and of Israel!

Never, my dear, while this transaction stands recorded, in all its deformity, on the page of Scripture, be tempted to distrust, as exaggerated, its representations of the depravity of man. But when you find that, by the purifying efficacy of grace the most unparalleled—sins, so "crimson" in their dye, could, in the sight of God, be at length "washed white" in the blood of the yet unborn "Seed" of their perpetrator—learn to wonder at and admire that "height and depth, and breadth and length, of the love of God in Christ," which, indeed, not only "passeth," but will ever transcend man's knowledge.

MARY. Mama! I hope since it says Bathsheba "mourned for her husband," that she knew nothing of his having been murdered.

MAMA. Let us charitably hope so, Mary, for the honour and sake of womanhood. Indeed we are warranted in so doing, not only by the absence of any joint censure of her, on that score, in Scripture (the removal of her child being evidently the chastisement of her previous participation in the guilt of which it was the off-

spring) but the unabated respect with which she was regarded through life by David; who, we are sure, could not so heartily have abhorred himself for "blood-guiltiness," and yet cherished an accomplice in the deed he loathed.

His first step, after the expiry of her allotted mourning, was to make her his wife, an act of reparation to which she was justly entitled, and by which it is to be presumed he lulled and quieted his, as yet, unawakened conscience; the stupefaction of which, under such atrocious guilt, is the best proof of the natural affinity of the unrenewed heart, for those "evil thoughts, murders, and adulteries," which our Lord himself tells us, find there a congenial residence.

But was the eye of Him, "who slumbereth not nor sleepeth," the less alive to the enormity of David's transgression?

MARY. No. It says, "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord;" but this seems little for so great a sin.

MAMA. Nothing, my dear Mary, but our habitual use of accumulated epithets, by which the simplicity of Scripture is sometimes made to appear comparatively tame—could possibly lead you, or any one, to consider as a "little thing," the annunciation of the displeasure of the God of heaven and earth. Far less, I am sure, will

ready anticipated by the matchless eloquence of Scripture.

MARY. Indeed, Mama, nothing even you could say, could explain or improve it. I remember crying over it, when I was a child, and thought it a true story; and was too young to understand what it meant.

MAMA. Nor will you, I am sure, feel it to be less touching now, when you can perceive its delicate bearing on the far more aggravated case of David.

But did any sense of kindred guilt deter *him* from the usual readiness of man to arraign his erring fellow-creatures?

MARY. Not the least. His anger was so "greatly kindled," that he said the man who had taken his poor neighbour's lamb, should "surely die," and he called God to witness, too!

MAMA. Mary, were there not a word in the Bible, against judging, "that we be not judged," and about the "beam in our own eye," which we so gladly overlook, while alive to the slightest "mote in our brother's,"—these few words, "Thou art the man!" might for ever banish pride and censoriousness from an unabashed world! For a mere act of unneighbourly churlishness, the king of Israel was ready to sign the death warrant of another; when not even the "blood" of Uriah

as yet "cried unto him from the ground," in reproach for a dishonoured family, and basely sacrificed friend!

But his awaking from such gross depths of self-delusion, must have been the more terrible. By what awful denunciations, was its first shock followed up?

MARY. Their very mildness must have heightened their awfulness, Mama. God speaks more like an offended father, than an angry judge; and yet the sentence is as bad as possible. The "sword was never to depart from his house," and "evil was to rise up against him," out of his own family.

MAMA. And never was doom either more strictly appropriate, or more unerringly fulfilled; as all the sequel of this history will sadly convince us.

What penalty might the rightful Lawgiver of heaven and earth, *according to the king's own readily pronounced judgment*, as well as the Divine decree, demanding "life for life"—have immediately exacted?

MARY. David's death, I suppose. But because he acknowledged his sin at once, God was pleased not only to spare his life, but to "put his sin away." How could this be, Mama, when it was punished by the loss of his child directly,

and by all kinds of misfortunes for the rest of his days?

MAMA. I am glad you have asked this, Mary, because few discern sufficiently, the perfect compatibility of sins being "blotted out," by faith and repentance, from the accusing records of Heaven—and yet their temporal consequences continuing to harass through life, the repentant sinner's path. The goodness of the Almighty, in the seemingly prompt extension of the former kind of pardon to David, has been, even now, matter for much presumptuous arraigning of the justice of the Most High. What would it have been, had not temporal chastisements (in that age of visible Divine government especially) vindicated Jehovah's sense of the enormity of the two leading sins denounced in his own decalogue?

It has been eloquently said of another much abused history, (that of the penitent thief on the cross) that "one such instance is recorded, that none might despair, and one *only*, that none might presume." The same, in some respects, may be said of the grace of God extended to David. Every encouragement to repentance, deep, humble, and immediate, is held out by it to the "chief of sinners." But, lest the festering "wounds," which even the sense of forgiveness could never entirely heal, in the "bruised spirit"

of David, should not suffice to deter all from "going on to sin, because grace hath abounded," the predicted calamities of a whole remaining life, were expressly declared to be the requital before men, of that "sin," which (as regarded Himself) the Almighty, in the exercise of his unquestioned prerogative of mercy, had been pleased to "put away."

The grounds for this manifestation of what has been called, God's "darling attribute," in remitting the eternal punishment of the sin of David, will be better appreciated, (even by one so young, and little fitted to judge of the decree of Omnipotence) by turning now to the 51st Psalm; the faithful mirror to succeeding ages, of that thoroughly humbled and contrite frame of mind, which lay bare to the eye of Him who "seeth the heart," at the moment when David cried, "I have sinned against the Lord;" and justified, by its unequalled depth of self-abasement, the unparalleled answer of mercy, "The Lord hath put away thy sin."

To what well known, and often experienced features, in the character of his God, does the Psalmist betake himself, for the "blotting out" of his grievous transgressions?

MARY. His "kindness, and the multitude of

His tender mercies." Well might he say this;—God had been so very, very good to him!

MAMA. And on this remembrance only does he found his humble hope of forgiveness. But Mary, is mere pardon, even at this early stage of the awakenings of a guilty conscience—the blessing uppermost in the mind of David?

MARY. No; he says, "wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

MAMA. Yes; both because sanctification is perceived by all true servants of God, to be an even nobler boon than pardon—and because, until purified by some agency higher than his own, he was not even fit to come as a suppliant, into the presence of Him who "cannot look upon iniquity."

Did he shew any disposition, like Adam, and most of his degenerate offspring, to extenuate, or get rid of the enormity of his crime?

MARY. Oh! no; he "acknowledged his transgression"—and said his "sin" was "ever before him."

MAMA. And why? What graved it, as with an iron pen, on his heart?

MARY. Because it was "committed against God, and God only"—and done "in his sight."

MAMA. Attend to this, my dear child, as an exemplification of the governing principle we

have already attributed to the mind of David. His injurious conduct towards man—flagrant as it had been—is, as it were, swallowed up and annihilated, in the view of his sinfulness towards God. Would that more of this hallowing principle, pervaded the penitence (as it is styled) even of many Christians; who because they are smarting under the deplorable consequences of guilt, either to themselves, or others—dignify with the name of repentance unto life, that "sorrow of the world" which we are told, by Him who "cannot lie"—"worketh" nothing but "death"—the spiritual death of error and delusion!

MARY. Mama—why does David ask to be cleansed with "hyssop?" What is it—and how could it make him "clean?"

MAMA. A deep spiritual meaning, my dear, lies under the explanation of this little word—proving that from the "cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall" (as this herb is called from its frequent place of growth) nothing mentioned in the Bible is too insignificant to become matter for instruction. But the office of "hyssop" in the ritual of Moses, was no unimportant one. With a bunch of it—selected perhaps for fragrance—the "water of purification" was sprinkled on all persons, legally unclean, or more fatally defiled by the recent commission of sin. Water, how-

ever, though the appointed symbol of purity—could never alone have achieved the "cleansing" of one sinner. It was therefore significantly mixed with the ashes of the propitiatory sacrifice, by which alone (as a type, *we* know, of the future atonement of Christ) the stain of guilt could be removed, in the sight of God.

You will now understand why being "purged with hyssop"—(the instrument employed to convey even to unconscious Israelites, the benefit of a yet unborn Saviour's blood) was held by David as a sure means of becoming "clean." But you observe, he looks higher for the necessary office, than the mere temporal ministry of God's priests, however authorized. It is the Lord Himself, who must "sprinkle" and "wash" and "cleanse" him; and who alone can "bring a clean thing out of an unclean"—that work which has baffled, and in the emphatic words of Scripture, ever will baffle—the unassisted powers of man!

Indeed, so satisfied was David of the inefficacy of all human means to make him a new creature, that at once he intreats that Divine power might accomplish it, and breathes forth the prayer "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

None indeed, my dear, save He who created it at first, can stamp His renewed image on the soul,

by which it has been wilfully defaced. And presumptuous indeed must that sinner be who *reckons* on an exertion short of Omnipotence, to repair the inroads of sin, or the wanton ravages of folly!

But what are the two means on which David—and *not* presumptuously—builds his hope of excluding from his regenerated heart, the evils he for ever abjures?

MARY. The "presence" and "Spirit" of God, I suppose you mean, mentioned in the next verse.

MAMA. Yes, Mary—the only safeguards by which continuance in holiness, can for one moment, be insured. And if a sense of God's constant "presence" be the surest preservative against transgression—and the assistance of his "Spirit" the sole means by which its inroads can be resisted—well might one from whom both had been so recently, and fatally withdrawn, implore the restoration of the forfeited blessings!

But every verse of this most spiritual psalm might afford matter for a sermon, instead of a passing remark; and hoping its meaning and value will, with advancing age and experience, become daily more evident to yourself, I will only touch on those remarkable remaining verses, expressive of the Psalmist's deep conviction of the godly sorrow for past sin, most acceptable to God,

and the bounden duty of every pardoned transgressor.

What startling remark does he make concerning "sacrifice"—at apparent variance with the known ordinance of God, and his own subsequent declaration that with such He will be "well pleased?"

MARY. He says God does not "desire sacrifice," or "delight in burnt offerings;" this sounds strange.

MAMA. Yes Mary; from our not adverting to the Hebrew idiom, by which any thing *inferior* to another, is often as it were annihilated, and a negative substituted for a comparative term. What "sacrifice" do we gather from the next verse, "is preferred by God," even to the institutions of His appointment?

MARY. A "broken spirit," Mama, a "broken and contrite heart,"—these it is said, He "will not despise."

MAMA. No, Mary; and words more consolatory (resounding especially as they do, from the depths of a convinced sinner's heart) are not to be found in the treasury of Scripture! But while aware, even under the Jewish economy, of the inefficacy of the "blood of bulls and of goats," to "take away sin"—did David look forward to no period when "whole burnt offerings" of pious

gratitude might find acceptance with him who had ordained them?

MARY. Oh yes; but I don't know exactly what he means by "*then*," at the beginning of the last verse.

MAMA. It means when God should sanction, with his renewed blessing, that "building of the walls of Jerusalem," in which David had been piously engaged; till diverted from it by sinful pursuits, or deterred by secret unworthiness.

MARY. Oh, now I understand; this makes it quite plain.

MAMA. And I wish it may make as clear to you, the different, and superior nature, and value in the sight of God, of that spontaneous tribute of obedience, emanating from the gratitude of the redeemed and purchased Christian—over the same "sacrifice," proceeding from the slavish, and unfilial, and unscriptural principle of *earning* with it a salvation, which all the united obedience of mankind, could never purchase for a single individual; and which bears to the "free will offering" of a heart, grateful for *accomplished* redemption—as poor and distant a resemblance, as the types and shadows of Judaism to that Sun of Righteousness who has eclipsed them by the "brightness of his rising."

But we must go back once more, to notice the

employment, to which David proposes, in gratitude for forgiveness, to dedicate his future life; and of which this Psalm affords an inestimable specimen. What is said of it at verse 13th?

MARY. "Then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted to thee."

MAMA. And such, let us hope, will be its effect on us, and on the many thousands to whom David has been made (like Noah) a "preacher of righteousness," by the events of his life, and the commentary on them, contained in his Psalms.

Having now, my dear, reviewed the grounds which, even to our finite apprehension, justify the removal from David of the everlasting doom due to his sins—we must return to survey, with equal submission to the will of Him who never "afflicts willingly," "nor grieves" needlessly "the children of men"—the train of family afflictions by which his breach of the most sacred ties, was appropriately punished. What was the first of these?

MARY. The child which Bathsheba had born, was to die. Mama, nobody, not even David himself, could think this unjust.

MAMA. No, Mary; but many overlook the reason assigned for its judicial removal, because by the "deed" which gave it birth,

David "had given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme;" a consequence, alas! not confined to the scoffers of his days, though even then, (as he complains in the 69th psalm,) the "reproaches" of them that through him "reproached God" formed an aggravated feature in his distress.

Was there any thing singular in the deportment of the king, under this trial, and bereavement?

MARY. He prayed fervently to God while the child lived, in hopes it might yet be spared, but when all was over, became composed and reconciled directly. So do many good people now, Mama, I think.

MAMA. True, Mary; and on the same consoling grounds—never perhaps more beautifully expressed than here—of expected reunion in another and better world. But the peculiarity of David's conduct which so much surprised his servants, consisted in his anticipating by his own commands, the friendly offices usually performed for Jewish mourners, by others. What did we lately learn on this subject?

MARY. That it was customary for visitors to a house of mourning, to bring provisions, and constrain the afflicted to take food.

MAMA. And, as it was customary for the survivors to bemoan their loss, by sitting on the ground for several days, (like Job) the "rising

from the earth" of David, was another departure from established usage; and shewed that he feared, by the indulgence of even permitted sorrow, to seem to murmur at the just decree of God.

In acceptance probably of this pious submission, God sent him in due time, another son, whose name of "Solomon,"—signifying "peaceful," indicated his father's faith in the predicted peace and prosperity of his future reign.

But to this God was pleased, by the ministry of the prophet Nathan, (to whose charge the child was from infancy consigned) to add a title more consolatory still; that of "Jedidiah," which means "beloved of the Lord."

Oh! Mary, what a striking proof is it that God "seeth not as man seeth," that of all the numerous family of David, none should have either received or deserved so blessed an appellation, save the child of his penitence and contrition; sent, as it were, by a pitying God, to comfort the most wretched of fathers, under the approaching troubles and crimes of his household!

But before entering on these, (from a detailed review of which I shall endeavour to spare you and myself) we must glance at, and set right, on eminent authorities, a too common misconception on the subject of the supposed barbarities committed by David on the conquered Ammonites.

MARY. I am glad you can explain this; as I was sorry David should be so cruel, and thought it was not at all like him.

MAMA. No, Mary; even while admitting that the Ammonites were themselves noted for barbarity—that in those less civilized times acts of retaliation were not only common but universal—and that the insult David had lately received in the person of his ambassadors might have called for signal retribution—we must feel relieved by the idea now generally adopted, that it was only by condemning his prisoners to painful and toilsome labours (resembling in kind those of the Israelites in Egypt, and connected probably with the vast preparations he had even then begun to make for the sacred temple) that David exercised his privilege as a conqueror. That he did not act towards them with any unusual or indefensible severity, is best proved by the decisive circumstance, that shortly after—in his own distressful flight before Absalom—he was met by the brother of the very king Hanun, whose injurious conduct he had only properly resented—with ample supplies of cattle and provisions for himself and people; and every token, not of forced submission, but of real sympathy and neighbourly good will.

Had this been always properly brought forward,

instead of being disingenuously suppressed—a world of "reproach" against David, and through him against the God he served, would have fallen to the ground. Let us bless Him, my dear, that if scoffers and blasphemers have never ceased to exert their pernicious subtilty in perverting Scripture—neither hath He at any time left Himself without a witness, in the many faithful men by whom their errors have been ably exposed.

MORNING EIGHTEENTH.

LESSON.—2d Samuel, Chapter xv. Psalms iii. and xlii.

MAMA. It is seldom, my dear Mary, that I approve of substituting human abridgements for the admirable, and generally useful, minuteness of Scripture. But we have lately emerged, under its guidance, from one dismal labyrinth of guilt and bloodshed; and fearful alike of weakening, by familiarity with crime, the natural horror of a youthful mind—or of associating painful impressions with the delightful study of the Bible —I have resolved to spare you and myself the detailed recital of the shocking treasons and murders, by which "evil" was indeed made to "rise up against David out of his own house."

The unfortunate separation of what ought to have formed one united "household," into distinct families—educated, according to the custom of those times, under the roof of their several mothers—gave rise to a possibility, (happily unknown among us) of prohibited attachments, among those who were brothers and sisters only,

in name, and not in affectionate daily intercourse from childhood. From the guilty admiration of Amnon, the eldest son of David, for one, who (as if to mark the sort of estrangement of feeling I have noticed) is called "the sister of his brother Absalom,"—sprung a whole train of deadly evils; and a punishment, of which none could fail to see the appropriateness—for the invasion by David, of the family peace and honour of Uriah.

The result—not immediate, but brooded on with unbrotherly rancour, for "two full years,"—was the treacherous murder, under the guise of fraternal hospitality, of Amnon, by his incensed younger brother Absalom; while to the king, the shock was embittered, first, by his having been led to apprehend the involvement in the slaughter of his whole family—by the consent which had been wrung from him, for Amnon to be present on the occasion—and by that secret partiality for Absalom, which made the banishment which justice obliged him to enforce, peculiarly painful to a parent's heart.

Of this, advantage was skilfully taken by Joab; ever ready officiously to interpose, for weal or woe, in the affairs of his uncle. And by an ingenious fiction, the drift of which accorded but too well with his own private inclination—David

was unhappily persuaded to recall his favourite son; after a three years' refuge with his maternal grandfather, a petty neighbouring king, at whose court he seems, alas! to have learned any lessons save those of penitence, filial piety, or loyalty!

For when David—as a proper but hard sacrifice to outraged parental and regal dignity—forbore for two years from admitting him (though in Jerusalem) to his presence—the turbulence of Absalom's disposition broke out in the method employed by him for compelling the interference of Joab in his behalf, viz. setting on fire the corn in his adjacent fields.

This, and his unblushing demand to see the king, and insolent challenge "if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me"—sufficiently prepare us for the career of treason and rebellion, by which he fulfilled towards his unhappy parent, the office of God's avenger; and then, like a broken vessel"—an instrument justly despised—was cast aside, unlamented by any, except his outraged but still partial father.

MARY. Thank you, Mama, for telling me all this so plainly and shortly. I am sure it could not be pleasant to read about it.

MAMA. *That*, Mary, had I believed it profitable, would have been a very insufficient reason for declining to dwell on it. But all that is ne-

cessary for us to know of this tissue of crimes and miseries, is their correspondence with the past denunciations of God, and their connexion with the future history of David; and these, the sketch I have given will enable you to trace.

MARY. Mama! was not Absalom remarkably handsome; and famous for his wonderful head of hair?

MAMA. Turn back and see—to gratify your youthful curiosity on this point—what is said of him at verse 25th of the chapter preceding that we have just read.

MARY. "In all Israel, there was none to be so much praised as Absalom, for his beauty; from the sole of his foot, even to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him."

MAMA. I was anxious you should read this precise description of a bodily perfection, rendered utterly valueless, by the want of corresponding qualities of heart and mind. Indeed, the "beauty" of Absalom, like the length of his boasted hair, may probably be reckoned one of his greatest misfortunes; as on it alone could have been founded the injurious parental partiality, and popular favour, by which he was emboldened to acts of the grossest filial impiety.

How do we find him paving the way for these, *in the* beginning of our chapter?

MARY. "Absalom prepared chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him."

MAMA. So far, he might only be affecting a little more state than belonged to the now eldest son of a powerful monarch. But by what pretended attention to their interests, did he insidiously set himself to "steal the hearts" of his father's subjects?

MARY. He stood "beside the gate" (that was where kings sat to try causes, Mama, was it not?) and said, "oh! that I were made judge in the land, that every man who had a suit or cause, might come to me, and I would do him justice!"

MAMA. What a cruel and unjust reflection, did these insinuations convey, on a king, of whom the "wise woman" employed by Joab to lay a fictitious case for decision before him, had lately said, "as an angel of God, so is my lord the king, to discern good and bad;" and who we are *sure*, from his very eagerness (however misplaced) to avenge the slaughter of the "ewe-lamb," was never backward to do justice to the meanest of his people! But of this, and all his other benefits, they soon shewed themselves basely forgetful. Nor could a nation, so prone to "forget God" as the Israelites were, be expected to "cleave" with unswerving loyalty to a mere earthly sovereign.

Of what sacrilegious pretence did Absalom

avail himself, to get his father's consent to leave Jerusalem?

MARY. A shocking one, Mama! he pretended to have a vow to pay to God for bringing him safe home again. But it says this was after "forty years;" and surely if that was the case, Absalom could not be young when he died, as I always fancied.

MAMA. The precise term of "forty years" here mentioned, has been attended with so much difficulty, from its exceeding by many years not only the age of Absalom, but even the *then* duration of the reign of David, (to which some have supposed it to refer) that it seems much more natural to adopt the idea of those who think "forty" is merely a transcriber's error for "four," the number of years really elapsed since Absalom's return from Geshur; two of which, you know, had passed before his reconciliation with his now ill-requited parent.

How did he shamefully abuse the too easily granted permission—to "go in peace."

MARY. By sending men with trumpets through all Israel to proclaim himself king; and it says, "the hearts of the men of Israel were after Absalom." How could the ungrateful creatures prefer a foolish lad to David?

MAMA. Just as their ancestors had preferred

the sway of Saul, a yet untried youth, to the righteous dominion over them of the King of kings! But you forget that the God, in whose hands are the "hearts" of men, had permitted the success of this unnatural conspiracy, in furtherance of his designs of chastisement on David, "against" whom (as we before remarked) "evil was to rise up out of his own house."

But from what moving incident do we best gather the alarming progress, and irresistible character of this rebellion?

MARY. Oh! Mama, David was obliged to flee for his life, from Jerusalem. Surely such a great warrior could have staid and defended it, if he had chosen. It would have been more like him.

MAMA. Like him, perhaps, in his days of former bravery, when, to the fearlessness of youth, was added the indomitable firmness, inspired by the protection of the Most High. But the now penitent and broken-spirited David, knew too well that the present affliction was from Him—to entertain even a thought of defence or resistance. And it is this evident sense of religious humiliation, and submission, which lend to a flight, —that we might otherwise think pusillanimous— so deep and overwhelming an interest.

This will be greatly enhanced, if we turn to

the 3d Psalm, penned amid the hurry and dejection, inseparable from his situation—yet preserving throughout, such a pious reliance on the ultimate fulfilment of God's promises of mercy. Read me the opening verses of this fugitive monarch's affecting appeal.

MARY. "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise up against me; many there be which say of my soul, 'There is no help for him in God.'"

MAMA. Yes, Mary; in this lay as usual, the chief bitterness of his affliction—that men, through his misconduct, and consequent adversities, should be led to question the "truth and faithfulness" of the Lord. But how confidently does he—even from the depth of temporal abasement—still look up to the often experienced protection of his God?

MARY. He says, he "will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, who have set themselves against him, round about;" and calls on God to "save him," because "salvation belongeth unto the Lord."

MAMA. With this pious reflection, let us console ourselves, while following the steps of the fallen king of Israel, and his handful of faithful servants, along that melancholy pilgrimage, *from*, instead of *towards* "God's holy hill,"—so

painfully contrasted with the triumphant journey "Zionward," which we lately commemorated.

MARY. Mama! who were the "Cherethites, and Pelethites, and Gittites," that staid with David? They must have been good people.

MAMA. Their desertion would indeed have been infamous; for the two first mentioned, composed the king's own body guard; and the "Gittites" are supposed either to be Philistine proselytes, (from "Ittai"—their head, being called a stranger) or more likely, Israelites, who, by resorting to David during his exile at Gath, had become in some measure, aliens.

But be this as it may, what was the result of the generous strife, between the distressed monarch, and "Ittai," the determined sharer of his evil, as well as prosperous fortunes?

MARY. His answer is almost as beautiful as Ruth's. "As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, there will thy servant be." Mama, one could almost find in one's heart to weep, like "all the country," to see so great a king, afraid of his own wicked son, and obliged to flee, as he did in Saul's time, "into the wilderness."

MAMA. Yes; and without either the buoyancy of spirit, or immediate countenance of God,

which then lightened every hardship, and made perils disappear.

But how did he prove—amid the strongest temptation to act otherwise—his prevailing regard for the honour, and acquiescence in the dispensations of the Most High?

MARY. He would not let the priests bring the ark of God away with him, (though it would have been such a comfort!) but sent it back again; and says so sweetly, "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he say, 'I have no delight in thee,' behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." This was the true way, Mama, to make God pity, and restore him.

MAMA. That He did both, we shall ere long have proof. And that in parting with the symbol of God's presence, David made a truly heroic sacrifice, we shall best gather from his passionate aspirations after spiritual privileges, contained in the 42d Psalm, composed on this affecting occasion.

With this we shall close our present reading; first noticing the external circumstances of humiliation, under which it was wrung from the Psalmist's desolate heart. What deep, and (except in one awful instance) unparalleled symbols

of distress, marked the progress of the king of Israel, along the "Mount of Olives?"

MARY. "He wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and went barefoot; and all the people with him, went up, weeping as they went."

MAMA. To go with the head covered, and the feet bare, indicated in those days, excess of grief and humiliation; and for a mighty monarch to be thus publicly seen, bore a testimony, as affecting as unequivocal, of outward resignation to the Divine will.

But of the inward emotions of his soul, we have a yet more unerring index, in the psalm already mentioned. Under what sylvan imagery, suggested probably by the wild and parched nature of the country they were entering on—does David represent his longing for the sacred rites he had been so cruelly forced to abandon?

MARY. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, even the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

MAMA. And with what painful fidelity and minuteness does he recall to his agonized memory, the forfeited pleasures of the sanctuary?

MARY. "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude. I went with them to the house of

God, with the voice of joy and praise; with a multitude that kept holy day."

MAMA. Would, Mary, that all estrangement from the house and service of God, were as involuntary, and as deeply deplored as David's! Then, indeed, might the Christian, while pining under suspended privileges—echo, either from the pathless desert, or yet more trackless deep, or from the solitude of some chamber of paralyzing sickness,—the Psalmist's triumphant enquiry, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the light of my countenance, and my God."

MORNING NINETEENTH.

LESSON.—2d Samuel, Chapters xvi. and xvii. Psalm lv.

MAMA. We are to-day, my dear Mary, to have our feelings of sympathy for the fugitive king of Israel, farther called forth, by the aggravation his distress received from the treachery of friends, and the reviling of enemies. Let us but follow his instructive example, in regarding these (however grievous) as wholesome parts of the discipline exercised over him by a just though merciful God,—and edification will be taught to flow from incidents in themselves the most painful and revolting.

For the first of these, we must turn back to the concluding verses of our last chapter. What piece of intelligence, equally bitter and unexpected, did David receive concerning Ahithophel?

MARY. That he was among the conspirators with Absalom. But why should this have been so unexpected?

MAMA. Because he was the king's chief, and most trusted adviser, or (as in the bitterness of

his heart he elsewhere expresses it) his "own familiar friend," who thus "took counsel" against him. What does he, on the first shock of the information, pray may be the result of the perfidious counsel?

MARY. That God would "turn it to foolishness."

MAMA. Yes; that He who had often to rescue His servants, "confounded the wisdom of the wise," would interpose in David's behalf, (as we shall find He did) by rendering useless the experience and sagacity of Ahithophel. But are you aware of the secret reason which urged a man, grown grey in the service and favour of the father, to espouse the cause of his rebellious son?

MARY. No. It seems very strange and unnatural.

MAMA. Not in the least, when you know that he was the grandfather of Bathsheba; whose marriage with David, had, we see, failed to obliterate from the mind of so near a relative, the injury inflicted on her, and the murder of her first husband; ever since which, his apparent friendship for David had probably been only assumed. To this deceit and dissimulation, direct allusion is made in the psalm we have included in our present reading, where David says, "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in

his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords."

But before proceeding to the touching latter portions of this 55th Psalm—how strikingly do its earlier verses pourtray the tumult and confusion attendant on the sudden revolt, and the flight it rendered necessary—and the depth of the panic from the Lord, which had seized even David?

MARY. "My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me."

MAMA. And what touching aspiration does he breathe forth, for escape from "the strife and violence he had seen in the city?"

MARY. "Oh! that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away and be at rest." Mama! I always thought that wish of David's beautiful, but never knew exactly what made him utter it. How I shall like to read the Psalms now, when every word of them will put me in mind of some part of this interesting story!

MAMA. Yes, Mary; you will henceforth read them, I hope, not only with the relish of one acquainted with their occasion and import—but with the thankfulness of a Christian, for their encouragement to faith, and example of submission, under the heaviest trials to which humanity

can be subjected. But what appears, from the rest of this affecting hymn, to have been the sharpest thorn in the present afflictive dispensation?

MARY. Oh! Ahithophel's treachery. Had it been an "enemy," David says, he could have "borne it:" but it was a man his "equal," his "guide," his "acquaintance," with whom he "took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company."

MAMA. Yes; one descending, like himself, into the vale of years—yet so far advanced before him on the downward pilgrimage, as to have been his honoured "guide" in the difficult science of government; but above all, the depositary of his most secret thoughts, and his fellow-worshipper at the footstool of their common Lord,—*He* it was who now cruelly (though it must be owned, not wholly unprovoked) availed himself of the first opportunity to turn against him with all the bitterness of long-cherished hatred!

MARY. Mama, this is very true, and I am not surprised David was angry, as well as hurt. But I am sorry he should wish even such a deceitful friend to "go down quick into hell."

MAMA. I am very glad you have observed it; because many pious persons, as well as yourself, are shocked at this, and similar imprecations

in the Book of Psalms; where, in most cases, they might have been more truly rendered, as simple prophetic intimations of the fate reserved by God, for such as like Ahithophel, betray, and revolt against their lawful rulers.

In this instance, it was certainly rather a prediction of the self-murder of a traitor, (who, in his fate as well as his conduct, resembled Judas,) than a prayer for a catastrophe, quite foreign to the singularly placable disposition of David; a temper which should lead us to interpret in the same manner, all seemingly vindictive expressions put into his mouth by our translation of passages susceptible of a different and milder meaning.

To confirm this decidedly in the case before us, we have only to look forward to the end of the Psalm, where the sentiment objected to is expressed (in a manner less liable to misrepresentation,) by a simple reference to the known decree of God.

"But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction; bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee."

MARY. I understand this quite now, Mama, and shall never think David *prays* for harm on any one, again.

MAMA. We must now return to our history. On whose tried fidelity and prudence did David

rely, for defeating (under God) the counsel of Ahithophel?

MARY. "Hushai the Archite," who wanted to go with him; but David would not let him, thinking he might be of more use in the city. But, Mama, would he not be as bad as Ahithophel, if he *pretended* to be Absalom's servant, and all the time was David's.

MAMA. I am never sorry, my dear, when the repugnance to all falsehood, natural to unsophisticated minds, prompts you to remark on apparent violations of integrity,—even when recorded of the most distinguished characters in Scripture. For, in the first place, (as we have often remarked) the faulty portions of their history are as much written for our instruction, as the most praiseworthy; though (as is the case, I think, here) they sometimes admit of a more favourable construction than is at first put on them. It is not so much for adhering to, and promoting (even by questionable means) the cause of his rightful sovereign, that Hushai is deservedly censured—as for expressly "doing evil that good might come," by seeming to countenance, for a moment, the rebellion he in his heart abhorred.

In so doing, he has unhappily (like his master) "given occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme,"—as if the God of all truth, in per-

mitting his deceit to become subservient to the punishment of far blacker treachery—sanctioned all the actions of his fallible instruments. David's share in the transaction indicated want of his habitual trust in God; who needed not the aid of human prudence, far less of human perjury, to "turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

But, by what false representation was David, just then, very appropriately himself deceived?

MAMA. "Ziba," Mephibosheth's rich steward, came out to meet him with a present of provisions, and said, his "master's son" staid behind, in hopes of being made king himself. Was this a lie?

MAMA. It has been generally so considered; and David's rashness, in at once depriving an absent person (the son, too, of his friend Jonathan) of all he had bestowed upon him, on the mere interested report of a servant, must have been matter to him, of subsequent regret and remorse.

But, to what open outrage and insult—amounting to personal violence—was the king exposed, at the hands of a *really* ungrateful survivor of the family of Saul?

MARY. Shimei not only came out, and "cursed" the king, and called him a "bloody man," and a "man of Belial," but cast stones at him and his servants.

MAMA. And on what did he ground this virulence of spite and hatred? Was it well founded?

MARY. No; for he said, God had "returned on David, all the blood of the house of Saul,"—and he never killed one of them.

MAMA. Turn to the 7th Psalm, verse 3d, and see the affecting appeal of David to Him who "knoweth all things," on this malicious slander.

MARY. "O Lord, my God, if I have done this—if there be iniquity in my hands:

"If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me, (yea, I have delivered him that without cause, was mine enemy.")

That he had, Mama! spared Saul's life twice over, when he might have taken it.

MAMA. Yes, Mary; but that effort of magnanimity, greatly as it has been praised and admired—sinks in comparison with the conquest over justly insulted feelings, which taught David, even in his present harassed and exasperated frame of mind, to spare the venomous reptile whom he could have crushed in a moment, in his path. But this he utterly declines; and that on a principle more sublime, and honourable to his piety, than even his prevailing one, of committing his defence (as he says in the Psalm) to God, who "seeth the upright in heart."

Though free from the precise kind of "blood-guiltiness" ascribed to him by the violent "son of Gera"—his conscience told him of "blood," for which the curses of Shimei were a just and appointed retribution. And Oh! Mary, let us, prone as we all are indignantly to resist even merited reproach—recall the meekness and submission, under Divine rebuke, of David, and his memorable answer,—"The Lord hath said unto him, 'Curse David;' who shall say, wherefore hast thou done it?"

MARY. This was really beautiful of him.

MAMA. The excuse he made, too, for the wretch, that he might well act so, when his own "very son sought his life"—how much does it prove the depth of the absorbing grief that swallowed up every other in the father's mind! But did these affecting words or this generous forbearance, disarm Shimei?

MARY. Not a bit, Mama; he went on cursing, and throwing stones still.

MAMA. And not only "stones," but "dust," which, throughout the East, is done to this day, by those who accuse a criminal, and demand justice against him. Bear this in mind, when you come to read his abject submission, and David's noble acceptance of it.

What, in the mean time, was taking place at Jerusalem?

MARY. Hushai, "David's friend," was pretending to join Absalom; and though it served *him* right perhaps, for his deceit—it is shocking to hear Absalom taunting him, with having left his father.

MAMA. And had the intoxication of success not infatuated the miserable rebel, he might have read, in the cautious evasive answer of Hushai—the unchanged nature of that allegiance, which you observe he only says he will yield to him, whom "*the Lord*" as well as the people, should "choose."

But how mercifully was it ordered for David, that while the demoniac suggestions of Ahithophel's revenge (by which the denunciations of Nathan were fearfully accomplished) were listened to as if in truth the "oracle of God"—his really politic advice, by which the ruin of David was rendered, humanly speaking—inevitable—was treated with a contempt, which broke his own proud heart, and caused the destruction of Absalom!

What was the plan his long experience suggested?

MARY. To take "twelve thousand men" that night, and come upon David while he was "weary and weak-handed"—and Oh! Mama—[redacted] I see that revenge was at the bottom of [redacted] the monster wished to be the man to do

it—and "kill the king only." But a more shocking thing still—the "saying pleased Absalom!" I used to think he could not mean to murder his father, but only to force David to make him his heir—but I shall never be in the least sorry for him more.

MAMA. I hope not—nor could a thought of pity ever have attended one, who was in heart, a parricide—but for the pathetic lamentation, extorted by nature from the parent whose death he desired.

But how was this unnatural "desire" frustrated?

MARY. By his listening to the advice of Hushai. The first part of it, about David and his people being desperate—and fighting "like a bear robbed of her whelps"—seemed likely enough; though if they had known he was so meek and subdued, they would not have been afraid of him. But surely, Mama, all Israel pulling any city he might be in, "with ropes into a river"—sounded like madness, and might have made them see Hushai was making fools of them.

MAMA. By no means, Mary; had your experience of ancient sieges (and I think you have read of a great number in Josephus) made you familiar with the engines used, before the invention of cannon, for demolishing the walls of fortified

places; one of the commonest of which, consisted of huge hooks thrown by ropes over the battlements; which frequently came toppling down with them, from the great force in pulling exerted by the besiegers.

But, though this, and the prospect it afforded of involving in one common ruin, David and his followers, removes all absurdity from the expedient of Hushai—it was too manifestly inferior in energy and wisdom, to that proposed by Ahithophel, to have been adopted, even by a rash youth, (far less by his experienced advisers)—unless the "eyes of their understanding" had been judicially "blinded" by God. We now see the temporal advantage of the self-denial exercised by David, in sending back the priests along with the ark—as his devoted friends, Zadok and Abiathar, were enabled to despatch their respective sons to give him notice of the happy respite afforded him by the suggestion of Hushai; and great must have been his thankfulness for the rescue achieved for him, by the interposition of the Lord. To this we find allusions in various Psalms, from the 41st to the 43d, all composed at this time, and admirably expressive of the alternations of trouble and deliverance, by which his instructive pilgrimage was chequered.

What traces of reviving hope and confidence

do we find at verse 11th of the first of these psalms—decidedly identified with the present relief, by the previous mention in it of the traitor Ahithophel, as his "own familiar friend?"

MARY. "By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me."

MAMA. And see how distinctly, in the latter, he looks forward to a return, under Divine guidance, to God's "holy hill" and tabernacle; and his joyful anticipation of resuming his most hallowed and favourite occupations! What were these, Mary?

MARY. "Then will I go unto the altar of God; unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee; O God, my God."

MAMA. And delightful it is to mark these beams of "light and truth," "sent out" (according to his fervent petition) from above; to reanimate the drooping soul, and "revive the spirit of the contrite one!"

We must now turn to a less pleasing subject, the self-destruction of the baffled traitor—to which, foreseeing the inevitable ruin of the usurper's cause—he was goaded by conscience, thus anticipating the stroke of justice; though the obloquy which has cleaved to his memory and fate, and its involuntary association with that of a blacker

traitor still—far exceeds any ignominy which could have been inflicted by the hand of the executioner.

But amid so much of sickening domestic treachery, it is delightful to witness the concurrence of strangers—from various motives of gratitude and generosity—in acts of substantial kindness to David, and his suffering followers. Who was the first of these, and what were the reasons of his liberality?

MARY. "Shobi," king of the Ammonites; you know he was brother to Hanun whose "crown of gold" David "lifted off," for ill-using his ambassadors.

MAMA. And which he must have generously replaced, contrary to the custom of those days, on the head of the next in succession; who now gratefully requited this act of royal clemency.

What do we know about the second of these "friends in need?"

MARY. Was he not the person who brought up Mephibosheth?

MAMA. The same; and well had David succeeded in converting foes into friends, when Saul's most faithful adherent was thus foremost to testify his loyalty and affection to the Lord's anointed! As for Barzillai—the third mentioned—all we know of him is, that his generosity equalled

his great wealth; and that, in the person of his son, it was David's happiness to be able to repay it.

What was the nature of the relief brought by these considerate purveyors?

MARY. "Beds" (these must have been a great comfort!) "and basons," as well as food to put in them,—"butter, and honey, and cheese, and sheep, and kine." No wonder David was grateful to them!

MAMA. No, Mary; but his chief tribute ascended, as it ever did, to Him, whose are not only "the cattle on a thousand hills," but in whose "hand are the hearts of the children of men," to dispose them to "do good and communicate;" and who (as it is beautifully expressed in the 23d psalm) had now, even when figuratively walking as it were, through the "valley and shadow of death, prepared him a table in the presence of his enemies, and made his cup to run over."

And observe the cheering and pious inferences drawn by him from the temporal bounties of God: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord, for ever."

might have escaped alive, according to his father's merciful injunctions.

How were these insolently, though perhaps wisely, violated by Joab?

MARY. He was very angry with a man who had seen Absalom hanging, and had not killed him. But the man was quite right, for "all the people" had heard David forbid it.

MAMA. Yes; and to what certain danger, would he by so doing, have exposed himself,—or, as he expresses it, have "wrought falsehood against his own life?"

MARY. Oh! I know what he means. If David had slain directly the Amalekite, who boasted of killing Saul—and the two captains, for murdering Ishbosheth—no wonder the man felt sure he would not fail to punish, whoever should venture to take Absalom's life.

MAMA. A just inference. But did it deter Joab from taking on himself the executioner's office?

MARY. No; he was far too fond of killing every body; and so fierce and haughty, that he was not afraid even of David.

MAMA. As is usual in all human actions, he was stimulated to the deed by a complication of motives, more or less commendable; amid which, his natural ferocity, and revenge for Absalom's

former ill-usage, probably predominated. But we may believe he was not altogether uninfluenced by the regard, which—in his own overbearing style—he yet felt for the security and interest of David's kingdom.

Having, therefore, by savagely thrusting the defenceless wretch through with three darts—sanctioned his pitiless slaughter by the hands of his armour-bearers—he now, in the humane spirit of the king's instructions—recalled the pursuers, and put an end to civil bloodshed. But did he reserve to his master the poor consolation of burying his son in his own sepulchre?

MARY. No; they cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a heap of stones above him. Was this for fear David should wish to remove the body?

MAMA. Partly, perhaps; but more likely, to fulfil, even after the transgressor was dead—the Mosaic duty of "stoning" a rebellious and disobedient son. Was such a "dog's death," as it is somewhere called in scripture—contemplated by Absalom in the days of his pomp and prosperity?

MARY. Oh! no; for he had reared to himself a fine pillar, to keep his name in remembrance; and beside it, I suppose, he meant to be buried. There is no fear of his being forgotten,—his

wickedness makes him remembered; but what became of the pillar?

MAMA. It was standing, two centuries ago, in the time of one of our earlier travellers; though half buried, in consequence of even the Turkish masters of Judea, throwing a stone at it as they passed, in abhorrence of filial impiety.

But what affecting particulars have we, of the inexplicable yearnings of a parent's heart, towards one so utterly undeserving?

MARY. David was sitting—looking out anxiously for news—"between the two gates"—what does that mean?

MAMA. In the ample space or porch, afforded by the thickness of the walls of ancient cities—between their outer and inner gates. By whom were the dreaded tidings brought?

MARY. After all, by "Ahimaaz the son of Zadok the priest." But why would Joab not let him "run" at first?

MAMA. From a reluctance, (which shews us there is in the rudest bosoms, some touch of feeling) that a lad he liked, should perhaps lose the king's favour, as the bearer of unwelcome tidings. How do we gather that what was intended to save David's feelings—enhanced his disappointment?

MARY. Because, when he saw Ahimaaz fore-

most, and running so fast, he thought the news must be "good," as well as the bearer. And, indeed, Ahimaaz durst not tell him plainly, but only said, "Blessed be God, who hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king."

MAMA. Did David's usually pious heart, at once echo these expressions of gratitude?

MARY. Oh! no; he was thinking only of his son—and asked, "Is the young man Absalom, safe?

MAMA. And in what cautious terms was the fatal truth at last insinuated by Cushi?

MARY. "The enemies of the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man." But David knew too well what this meant, and was much moved, wept, and said, "Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Mama, bad as Absalom was, I am very sorry for David.

MAMA. God forbid you should not, my dear; the more so, that he whose eternal loss he so bitterly deplored, was not (like the innocent babe over whose cold remains he soon ceased to weep) gone a little before him, into Abraham's bosom—but had descended, according to his unconscious father's own prediction, before his "days were half numbered," "quick into the pit," "reserved

for the ungodly." This no doubt it was, that so unseasonably prolonged the *hopeless* mourning of David. But what disheartening effect had it on the people?

MARY. They durst not enjoy their victory; and stole into the city ashamed, like people who had been beaten. But Mama! how harsh and insolent Joab always is! He scolds the king, as if he had been his servant, instead of his master.

MAMA. I hope you do not think that a change in their position, would have excused want of feeling, even to an inferior. But we must take into account the natural bluntness of Joab's character, and the greater familiarity authorized by the manners of the age, and his own near relationship. Harsh as it sounded, the advice was so substantially reasonable, that David acted on it, and once more shewed himself to his subjects.

But did he manifest any desire to avail himself of his victory, and return, like a triumphant conqueror, to Jerusalem?

MARY. Oh! no; he was too melancholy. But the people themselves began to dispute about it; and asked why "no one spoke a word of bringing back the king?"

MAMA. Thus proving, far more convincingly, *that* God "turned their hearts as one man" to-

wards his now sufficiently humbled "anointed," than if the idea of resuming the throne had originated with himself. When these expressions of loyalty, however, reached him in his exile, he shewed himself anxious to reserve the chief honour of his restoration to his own tribe of Judah.

By what apparently strange expedient did he succeed in gaining them over?

MARY. By promising to make "Amasa" (whom he calls his "bone and flesh") captain of the host, in place of Joab. How could he think of this, when Amasa had been Absalom's general?

MAMA. That very circumstance it was, which made it *politic*, (though not perhaps just) to promote the one nephew, at the expense of the other; whose late disobedience and harsh reproaches David seems never to have forgiven. And the power, possessed and exercised over the men of Judah, by Amasa, justified the sagacity by which the step was dictated.

What event, in which a proud and vindictive mind would have found subject of exultation, if not of severity—occurred on the king's homeward journey? But first, do you recollect any thing about "Gilgal," where all Judah came, to conduct the king *over Jordan*?

MARY. I hope I shall never forget it, Mama;

because you told me the "twelve stones" the Israelites put up there, *in the bed of the river where they went over dry*, were a standing memorial of the truth of God, and the Bible.

MAMA. They are, Mary; and had no other fruit occurred from our readings together, I should have blessed God that his truth had been thus graven "as on a rock" in your memory, by even an imperfect application of the means devised by himself. While the stones of "Gilgal" stood, all Israel echoed their hourly testimony to the miraculous passage into Canaan. And when, by the lapse of ages, and the "swellings of Jordan," that perishable memorial was swept away—the significant name of "Bethabara," and the unanimous tradition of a whole nation, replaced them with a monument more indelible still. I am glad my dear, you recollected this. Associate with the remembrance the unswerving conviction, that every truth of the Bible (though resting on less of visible demonstration than the stones of "Gilgal,") is inspired by the same Spirit, and carries the same authority.

We must return to Shimei. How did this cowardly railer abjectly seek to atone for his unmanly attack?

MARY. By coming "first of all the house of Joseph" to meet the king, and begging him to

forget what he had done "perversely." I wonder he did not rather keep quiet, and hide himself; it was too bold to expect forgiveness.

MAMA. So thought Abishai the brother of Joab, and longed to be permitted to indulge his thirst for blood. But David, while seeing through, and despising the hollowness of Shimei's submission—both felt and expressed that the dearest privilege of his restored sovereignty, was the power to extend pardon, and confer life.

What less pleasing office awaited him, in atoning for his own former rashness?

MARY. It seemed poor Mephibosheth, so far from wishing to be made king, had been doing nothing but mourning (that was the meaning was it not, of his going so neglected?) from the day the king went away, till he came back; so that Ziba had told a lie. I wonder David did not punish him.

MAMA. *That* his own rash gift of Mephibosheth's whole estate, rendered more difficult, as well as the services Ziba had unquestionably rendered to him in his recent distress. Things were therefore merely restored to their former footing; and the king's disapprobation of Ziba sufficiently marked, by his returning to ad-

minister for another, the lands he had surreptitiously obtained for himself.

But was the recove y of these uppermost in the mind of the son of Jonathan?

MARY. No, no; he said Ziba might "take all," so glad was he to see David "come again to his house in peace." And I am glad too that Jonathan's son was like his good father.

MAMA. By whom was a kindred spirit of disinterestedness manifested?

MARY. By old Barzillai, who had maintained the king all the time he was at Mahanaim; and yet, when he asked him to come and live with him at Jerusalem, said he was too old to enjoy a court, and sent his son instead.

MAMA. And never let us forget, Mary, the grounds of this refusal, (besides those of mere generosity and indifference to reward) viz: the unsuitableness to advanced age, of the vain and idle pleasures of youth; the relinquishment of which by the "hoary head," proved that to Barzillai at least, it had become a "crown of wisdom."

We must hasten over less pleasing matter—the unholy strife between Judah and Israel, about the credit of restoring the king; and the opportunity it afforded for a fresh chastisement of David, in the shape of the revolt of "Sheba." Who was he?

MARY. A "Benjamite," and a "man of Belial." I think, Mama, all the bad people we read of just now, were Benjamites.

MAMA. For a natural reason, in a history of pretenders and rebels, viz.—that they were of the family and kindred of Saul.

But how were the otherwise easy measures for putting this one down, distracted by the feuds of the rival commanders?

MARY. Amasa, the new one, did not come as soon as he ought, and David bade Abishai go after Sheba; and Joab must have gone too, (though David did not tell him)—for, when Amasa met them, he pretended to be glad to see him, and stabbed him, *while kissing him*, with his sword. What a horrid jealous monster he was, to do so to both Abner and Amasa!

MAMA. Bear this in mind when you hear David blamed for solemnly recommending to Solomon, to take advantage of more settled times for bringing this reckless murderer to justice.

But how did Joab, in the meantime, attain his end, of being once more "over all the host?"

MARY. A wise woman betrayed Sheba to Joab, and cut off his head; and I suppose, David did not like or dare to make him answer for his murders, just when he had done this for him.

MAMA. Precisely, Mary. Worldly policy

may, for a while delay the vengeance decreed by the Almighty; but in the end, it will "find the transgressor out," and fulfil the everlasting sentence pronounced against the first murderer on record, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

MORNING TWENTY-FIRST.

LESSON.—2d Samuel, Chapters xxi. and xxii.

MARY. Mama, I am glad we have read the first of these chapters, because there is something in it I want explained, and I daresay you can do it for me. You know, David swore to Jonathan, that he would be kind to his children after him, and so he was to Mephibosheth; but Saul, too, made him "swear by the Lord," that he would not "cut off his seed, or destroy his name out of his father's house." I wonder, when this was the case, at David's delivering "seven men of his sons" to be "hanged up," before the very Lord to whom he had sworn, not to kill them.

MAMA. I have always begged you, my dear, when your increased attention to what you read, suggests apparent difficulties, to mention them at once—as there are few in Scripture which deeper attention still, does not enable us wholly or partially to remove. In the latter degree at least.

think your objection (no unnatural one) to David's conduct, has been obviated. But, that you may comprehend this, we must investigate the painful transaction from the beginning.

How came any idea of judicial severity against the family of his late enemy, to be entertained at all by David—whose generous forbearance towards them had been, till now, most praiseworthy and complete?

MARY. There was a three years' "famine in the land," Mama; and when David "enquired of the Lord" about it, God answered, that it was for "Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." Who were they?

MAMA. I really must refer you to our former reading for an answer to that question; as I am sure the history of the subterfuge, by which a tribe of Canaanites (amid the full tide of extermination carried on against them by Divine command) gained not only their lives, but partial admission into the "commonwealth of Israel"—was not a thing to be forgotten.

MARY. No, certainly; I remember it all now; and that to punish their deceit, in pretending to be "strangers from a far country," and not Canaanites,—they were only allowed to be "hewers of wood," and "drawers of water," to the Israelites.

MAMA. True. But, by what pledge were their forfeited lives (under these abject and humiliating conditions) saved to them?

MARY. You told me, Mama, Joshua and the princes of Israel took a rash oath, that they should live, without "enquiring of God" about it.

MAMA. Which oath—even while disapproving of its tenor—the God to whom perjury is hateful, was pleased solemnly to confirm. Now, could He, by whom the promise of mercy to the Gibeonites had been (under certain conditions requisite for the vindication of his honour) ratified—see, without indignation, its violation (from pretended zeal, for the children of Israel and Judah) by Saul?

MARY. I daresay not. But why did Saul break it by slaying them, and when?

MAMA. As no special mention occurs of the massacre, they are generally thought to have been involved in that reckless slaughter of God's priests (whose attendants, you know, they were in the more servile offices of the sanctuary,) which took place in consequence of the treachery of "Doeg, the Edomite;" during which we are told, that Saul "smote in Nob, the city of the priests, both men, and women, and children, and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword."

MARY. I see now why God was so angry about the Gibeonites. But when David inquired what he could do for those who remained, to make up for it—I think they shewed themselves deceitful still; for they first said he should "not for them kill any man in Israel;" and then asked for seven of Saul's sons that they might hang them.

MAMA. Our translation, Mary, does certainly lay them open to the imputation of having added insincerity, to a thirst for retribution, pardonable in an uncivilized and only half-converted people. But the margin of our Bible (that frequent solver of verbal difficulties) gives us as the more accurate sense, that it did not "pertain," or "*belong*" to them to "kill," or condemn "any man in Israel;" for which reason, they came to demand justice from the king.

Let us now see how far—in granting what the existing law of "life for life" rendered an equitable demand,—David forfeited his engagements either to Saul or Jonathan. Those to the latter you have yourself admitted he strictly kept; and the idea some people have been wicked enough to throw out, that the demand was a device suggested by David, as a pretext for destroying (from political motives) the race of his late foe—is utterly rebutted by the simple fact, that Mephibosheth, Saul's only rightful heir, had already a son called

"Micah," *grown up;* through whom he ultimately became (as we find by the Chronicles) the father of no less than one hundred and fifty recorded descendants! But while these, or any of them, might have proved formidable competitors for the throne—none of the "seven" (selected by David, as if his special object had been to *preserve*, instead of annihilating the direct line of Saul) could interfere with his promise, to "keep up his name in his father's house." The two born of an "handmaid," were by that circumstance set aside. Nor could the five sons of Saul's daughter, "called after," and "keeping up the name" of their alien father—come in any respect under that "oath of the Lord," which, we are expressly told, had induced David, at the greatest personal risk to spare Mephibosheth.

I have dwelt longer on this than usual; but as you yourself seemed to see doubts in the passage, I was not sorry to take the opportunity of shewing you how capable they were of simple explanation.

But by what amiable *trait*, in unison with his wonted generosity, did David prove that justice, not enmity, was at the bottom of this act of retribution?

MARY. He buried the bones of those that were hanged by the Gibeonites; and was at the

pains to get back Saul and Jonathan's bones from the people of Jabesh-Gilead, that they might all be buried together in the sepulchre of Kish, Saul's father. This was very right and handsome in David: but what first made him think of it, I dare-say, was the behaviour of the poor mother whom I have so often felt for—sitting watching her dead sons, and keeping the birds off them by day, and the wild beasts off them by night! Why did she do this, "till the rain dropped on them from heaven?"

MAMA. Because not till this gracious token of God's removal of the drought which had occasioned the famine—were the victims of His displeasure permitted to be consigned to the sepulchre of that father, whose "sins" were thus, in the "third generation," remarkably "visited." *Then*, and not till then, is it said, "God was entreated for the land."

But what narrow escape did David shortly after make, in an expedition against the Philistines?

MARY. One of the sons of the "giant," (I suppose it means Goliath,) "thought to have slain David, for he had waxed faint;" but Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, succoured him. I think Abishai was the best of them, Mama; we never hear of his doing any thing so bad as Joab.

MAMA. No: though his natural ferocity betrayed itself more than once; in his anxiety to "smite Saul," when asleep in his tent, and his eagerness to silence, by the sword, the revilings of Shimei. But here he only acted the part of a faithful and gallant servant.

Do you recollect any other instance (besides his volunteering to accompany David into Saul's camp) in which his bravery and devotion to his chief, were romantically displayed? It occurred in a chapter where a press of more important matter, put it out of our power to notice the touching episode,—honourable alike to all parties.

Turn to the 11th chapter of 1st Chronicles, at the 17th verse, and see what is there recorded as having happened, during a former contest with the Philistines; while they yet possessed the fortress of Bethlehem, and David was in his old refuge, the cave at Adullam?

MARY. "David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is by the gate!" Mama, what could put this wish in his head?

MAMA. I thought I had made you aware of the value of water generally, in a "thirsty land" like Judea; but that of the "well of Bethlehem"—where most likely he had often as a boy, watered his flock—was endeared to David by [redacted]

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youthful recollection. Was this inconsiderately expressed "longing" gratified?

MARY. Oh! yes. His three captains broke through the host of the Philistines, and drew water, and brought it to him. But he said, God forbid he should drink it, as they had brought it at the jeopardy of their lives—and he "poured it out unto God." I would not have lost this story for the world! It makes one like David better than ever, and shews how much he was beloved.

MAMA. Yes, and how worthy he was of such affectionate devotion! But you have not told me who was the "chief of the three" who thus risked their lives to give a momentary pleasure to their leader?

MARY. Oh! Abishai! I shall always think better of him too.

MAMA. And feel indebted, I hope, to the sacred writers, for preserving to us such minute traits of individual character, as enable us doubly to sympathize in the fate of the persons of whom they are related.

But we must return to our second chapter, entirely consisting of a hymn of praise; partly composed long before, on occasion of David's repeated deliverances from Saul—but now revised, and applied to his more recent victory, and restoration.

With what solemn recognition of the Divine protection does it open?

MARY. "I will love thee, O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."

I perfectly understand all the comparisons used in this verse, Mama, except that about the "horn of salvation;" and yet it strikes me you have spoken of it before.

MAMA. It *has* occurred before in our reading, as it frequently does in Scripture; where "exalting," or "lifting up" the "horn" is synonymous with granting victory, or promotion. It was derived, I told you, from a head-dress (confined to occasions of parade and triumph) composed of gold, and much resembling a horn in shape.

MARY. Oh! I remember you said somebody had seen it still worn in Abyssinia.

MAMA. Yes, Bruce the traveller; who had the pleasure of first practically illustrating this Scripture expression.

But let us mark, as we glance over them, the singular appropriateness of those used in this beautiful hymn, to the recent perils, and escapes of the Psalmist; of the "floods of ungodly men," to the rebel host by whom he was lately "made

afraid"—of the "sorrows of hell," to his late bitter agony and remorse—and of the "snares of death," to the subtle and traitorous counsels, which the mercy of the God unto whom, in his "distress he cried," could alone have frustrated!

The lofty and inimitable description of the glory and majesty of Jehovah, which is next introduced—speaks for itself; and is incapable of being heightened by any force of uninspired comment. It has been admired as the triumph of poetry, by those, blind alas! to the magnitude of the truths it conveys.

But no sooner does gratitude for personal deliverance again resume the place of general tributes to the "Majesty on High"—than we perceive the special propriety of the images, and their relation to their writer's individual circumstances. Well might he say he had been "drawn" by a hand from above "out of many waters," and "delivered from his strong enemy" (Absalom,) and "from them which hated him," (Ahithophel) and from those who took advantage of his "day of calamity," (even Shimei) but threatened by all of whom, "the Lord alone was his stay."

Passing over a whole accumulation of highly poetical imagery, significative of the aid and protection, on various occasions, of his God—we must *hasten to* notice, towards the close, a prediction,

which we shall in our next reading, see literally fulfilled.

What does David say will be the immediate consequence, of the Lord's recent deliverance of him from civil war and rebellion—significantly expressed, by the "strivings of the people?"

MARY. "Thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me."

"As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me, the strangers shall submit themselves unto me."

MAMA. Bear this in mind (even while remembering its higher and more remote application to the Messiah's kingdom) when we come to read of the alliance, sought with David by the powerful king of Tyre, and the ample tribute paid by him, of the valuable produce of his country, for the Temple of the yet "unknown God" of Israel.

The resolution of David that such He should no longer remain if it were in his power to extend the knowledge of His might and goodness, "Therefore will I give thanks to thee, O Lord, *among the heathen*, and sing praises unto thy name,"—is worthy of the piety and benevolence of him by whom it was uttered; and may serve as an example to Christians, who, in addition to that knowledge of the one true God, which it was the ardent wish of David to disseminate—

have it in their power to confer on "nations sitting in darkness," the yet more inestimable gift, of subjection to the "Saviour" to whom David here unconsciously alludes, and an interest in that "Seed," in whom alone it can truly be said, that God "sheweth mercy, *for evermore!*"

MORNING TWENTY-SECOND.

LESSON.—1st Chronicles, Chapters xxi. and xxii.

MARY. I am quite anxious, Mama, to have the chapters we have just read, explained to me. I know David's numbering the people *must* have been a great sin, since the devil provoked him to do it, and God punished it so awfully; but the reason that made it wicked, is not so plain as usual—though I am sure you will make it so presently.

MAMA. I am glad you think so, my dear,—such confidence cannot but be grateful to a mother's heart; though I scarcely ever feel more deeply the extent of my own ignorance, than when attempting to enlighten the yet greater darkness of another. But happily for us both, the loftiest human intellect, guided and enlightened by aid from above—has been for centuries employed on the elucidation of Scripture; and difficulties which perplexed the pious of past ages, are long since removed from the path of the more

favoured child of our own day. The result of their labours will enable me, I hope, with the blessing of God, to convince you, that the worse than useless enumeration of his subjects by David, (which even the unscrupulous Joab remonstrated against as sinful) was not only so in God's sight, as the offspring of pride; but involved the violation, on the part of both king and people, of a direct Divine command.

MARY. Mama, even I could see it was done out of pride; and that I know is hateful to God.

MAMA. But what disposition, if possible yet more offensive to Him (in His character of "Lord of Hosts,") did it manifest; in direct opposition to the juster sentiments expressed, (before encountering, with a single companion, a whole Philistine garrison,) by his friend Jonathan? Do you remember them?

MARY. Yes; you made me remark them. He said it was all the same to God, "to save by many, or by few."

MAMA. And so David thought and felt, when pursuing with four hundred men, the countless host of Amalekite spoilers! But where is the human heart, which the severest trials can entirely divest of unbelief; or in which a brief sunshine of restored prosperity does not foster, and cherish, the congenial growth of pride?

When he, who with "five smooth stones from the brook," had defied, in the strength of his God, the accursed Philistine—lived to put (in defiance of his own pious precept) "his trust in chariots and horses," and his "safety in the number of an host"—surely all confidence in the stability of unassisted human virtue, must be felt to be more vain, and groundless still!

But to impress this salutary conviction more strongly on our minds, we must minutely follow up our painful inquiry. In what mild and persuasive terms (wholly at variance with his usual harshness) did Joab plead with his uncle against the measure?

MARY. He said, "Now the Lord thy God add unto the people (how many soever they be) an hundred fold, and that the eyes of the king may see it; but why doth my lord, the king, delight in this thing?" He does not say, however, *why* he and the "captains of the host" were so much against it; else perhaps David might have been persuaded.

MAMA. He does not indeed give his reason *here*, Mary, but (observe the use, as I have often remarked, of parallel passages)—in the corresponding part of the book of Samuel, he adds, "why will the king *be a cause of trespass to Israel?*"

important words, as we shall find, proving that Joab at least was fully aware in what the "transgression," so severely punished, lay; and that it was not for light reasons that the "king's word" (as we read in Samuel) was "abominable unto Joab."

The ground of these strong expressions, fully justified by the subsequent indignation of the Lord—I will now explain to you.

In that book of "God's law," Mary, which David (in his holier hours) indited the whole 119th psalm, as well as many others, to "exalt and magnify,"—in which he says, it was his "delight to meditate day and night,"—which he professes to take "for a lamp to his feet, and a light to his path,"—which he declares he had "hid in his heart, that he might not sin against God;" the testimonies of which he had taken for his "counsellors," and *every precept of which, concerning all things he esteemed to be so right,* that "rivers of tears ran down his eyes," because of their infraction by others: In this book, of which none in Judea, from the prince to the peasant, could plead other than wilful ignorance—was recorded this *express command.*

"When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every

man *a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, that there be no plague amongst them when thou numberest them.*

"Thus shall they give, every one half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, one half shekel shall be the offering of the Lord.

"The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less; when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make atonement for your souls.

"And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be *a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord,* to make an atonement for your souls."

MARY. Mama! I am quite astonished that any one should wonder now at David's being punished, and the people too, if the atonement money was neither asked nor paid. Surely every one does not know that this solemn command was in the Bible!

MAMA. No, Mary; scoffers do not choose to know it, because it defeats their blasphemous purpose; the irreligious know or "care for none of these things;" and alas! many slothful Christians prefer remaining in uncomfortable doubts respecting the wisdom and justice of God's deal-

ings with men, to "searching the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things be so." Let us bless God that the search has been made, and the key found; and though it might rather surprise us that the "ways which are not as our ways," and the "thoughts raised as high above our thoughts" as the "heaven is higher than the earth," should be capable of accommodation to our finite understandings—let us gratefully accept the edification resulting from a condescension, as unexpected, as it is undeserved.

To return to our *now* too intelligible history of sin and chastisement. Do we find in it the slightest intimation, of the recognition, on the part of king or people, of the Divine requirement of a ransom—one so congenial, we might have thought, to the usually pious and grateful feelings of David?

MARY. Not a word. I suppose they either forgot or were too proud to pay it.

MAMA. And in either case—the latter I fear was the more criminal and likely one—were justly involved in one national punishment.

But after nine months (nearly the same period as on his former transgression) of unaccountable impenitence—what effect had the prodigious, though yet incompletely taken numerical strength

of his kingdom, on the heart of its monarch? Was its pride gratified, as he expected, by the result?

MARY. Oh! no; "his heart smote him," and he "said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly; and now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done very foolishly."

MAMA. And such, remember, Mary, is the usual and melancholy result of those darling sins, of which an apostle might well ask, "What fruit had ye *then*, in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?"

Who was sent this time, in the room of good Nathan, to confirm the convictions of the repentant king?

MARY. The prophet "Gad, David's seer." Mama; since he *had* a prophet, to inquire of, he might have known long since, that the thing was sinful.

MAMA. Nay, Mary; by how many among ourselves, who have, like David, "Moses and the prophets"—do both remain unconsulted and unthought of! And never forget on what high authority, their condition is represented as, in *most cases*, defying miracle itself.

But to David a miracle of "mercy" was, "in

the midst of judgment," extended. What was it?

MARY. He was allowed to choose his own punishment; and say whether he would have three years' famine—three months' defeat before his enemies—or three days of the "sword of the Lord, even the pestilence, destroying through all the coasts of Israel." No wonder David was "in a great strait," Mama; but I think he was quite right to choose rather to fall into the hand of God, who is merciful—than into the hand of man.

MAMA. Can you discover no other reason, which made it "right" for David in humility to make choice of the "plague" rather than any of the other afflictive dispensations?

MARY. Oh! I know what you mean. A "plague" was just what God had threatened should be "among the people," if they neglected to pay the ransom "for their souls."

MAMA. It was; and no "atonement" could now be made by the penitent monarch for himself and his people, more acceptable or becoming, than submissive acquiescence in the precise chastisement incurred by their joint disobedience.

But, in what affecting terms does he invoke on himself, as the greater sinner—indeed the sole

cause of the national delinquency—the chief burden of the merited penalty?

MARY. Oh! Mama, it is very affecting, and, like David; he says, "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered: even I it is that have sinned, and done evil indeed; but these sheep, what have they done?

MAMA. Ay, Mary; how different were now the emotions, and how different had been the conduct of this faithless "shepherd of the flock," while betraying *into* sin and peril, the "many thousands of Israel"—from those which swelled his breast, and animated his youthful courage, when rescuing "from the paw of the lion and the bear," his father's "few sheep in the wilderness!"

How many of his helpless people paid the forfeit of their lives to the violated law of God?

MARY. "Seventy thousand," Mama. No wonder David and the elders of Israel were "clothed in sackcloth," or, that they "fell on their faces," when they saw the "angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem."

MAMA. There is a "sword," Mary, which will one day be "girded on the thigh" of David's far higher than angelic descendant—the thought of

whose stroke (which no penitence will *then* be able to disarm) this visible representation of the delegated wrath of heaven, should assist us to remember, and avert!

By what means was the hand of the destroyer now "stayed?"

MARY. By David's prayer, I suppose, Mama; and God's mercy.

MAMA. Was nothing more prescribed, in the way of atonement? No recognition of the great truth, that "without shedding of blood" there was then, as now, no "remission" of sins?

MARY. Oh! yes. The angel commanded Gad to tell David to "set up an altar to the Lord," in the very thrashing-floor where the thing happened.

MAMA. And did David, though king of Israel, immediately take possession of the property of the affrighted "Jebusite;" who, with his sons, had hid themselves from the presence of the angel?

MARY. No, no. Though this stranger (who seems to have been a good man) was willing to give not only the "floor," but the oxen, and thrashing instruments besides, for nothing, to the king—David would not "take that which was another's," even for God—nor "offer burnt-offerings without cost."

MAMA. Or as it is yet more explicitly—and oh! Mary, *usefully* and *edifyingly* expressed, in Samuel—"neither will I offer burnt-offerings to my God, of that which doth cost me nothing;" as those do among ourselves, who make a virtue of abstaining from sins, and sacrificing pleasures, to which, from natural temper, they feel little temptation.

At what price, on the contrary, far beyond their possible value—did David purchase the hallowed ground and its appendages?

MARY. "Six hundred shekels of gold by weight." What a price for a poor man's thrashing floor!

MAMA. Not too great surely, Mary, for the future site of the proud temple of Jerusalem, and the scene of a national deliverance, from one of the greatest, and most deserved of national judgments!

When was the Lord at last entreated for the people, and the sword of the still visible angel, restored to its scabbard?

MARY. Not till David had "offered both burnt offerings and peace offerings," on the "altar" God had ordered him to "set up;" and till God had answered him from heaven by "fire."

MAMA. Nor did the sword of the avenger remain thus long unsheathed, save to impress on

future ages the indelible lesson—that till the great sacrifice, by which alone atonement is made, and peace purchased, is applied to our guilt *in the way prescribed by God*—the decree of eternal death gone out against every sinning child of Adam, remains in unmitigated severity—ready to fall (though for a time restrained by him who "willeth not that any should perish") on the heads of all, "who neglect so great salvation."

MARY. Thank you for making this all so plain. But why was David "afraid" to worship at Gibeon, "because of the sword of the angel of the Lord?" One would have thought the place where he had actually been seen—more awful.

MAMA. And so it was, Mary: and for *that reason*, did David confine his future worship to the spot—so miraculously rendered "holy ground"—and evidently selected by the Lord as the site of his future sanctuary.

But let us hail with pleasure (after so much to distress and appal) the quickening effect of affliction, on the zeal and piety of David. Do you remember what he himself remarks on this subject? "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word."

In what commendable preparations did his revived devotion manifest itself?

MARY. Gathering workmen and materials

for the "house of God"—because Solomon his son was "young and tender"—and the house "must be of fame and glory throughout all countries."

MAMA. And so, indeed, by the blessing of God, it proved! But what corroboration do you find in the list of materials provided,—of our yesterday's remark as to David's influence over foreign countries?

MARY. "The Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar-wood to David. Was this very scarce, Mama?

MAMA. Cedars were then, as since, chiefly to be found on Mount Lebanon, which has derived from these trees much of its celebrity, as they, in return, have borrowed from it their name. This mountain lay in the otherwise limited territory of "Tyre," whose monarch's great power, chiefly derived (like our own) from maritime commerce,—we shall find cheerfully enlisted, through respect for David—in the service of Solomon his son.

MARY. Mama! you were quite right about the *wars* of David being one reason why God would not let him *build* the temple. He says himself, that it was because he had "shed much blood upon earth in God's sight."

MAMA. A decided proof, Mary, that even

just and permitted warfare, (like that of David) is in the eye of the God of peace, a necessary evil; as the erection of his chosen sanctuary, during the reign of a *purposely* pacific monarch—shadows forth the future triumphs of the gospel of peace—when "nation shall not rise up against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Among the many excellent advices here given by the declining monarch, to his highly favoured son—can you discern one evidently referring to his own late unhappy infraction of a Divine command?

MARY. Distinctly, Mama. He says, "Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments, *which the Lord charged Moses concerning the children of Israel*," —and you know it was just one of them which David had paid so dear for breaking.

MAMA. True; and where do we find a confirmation of the assertion, that it was "good for him to have been afflicted?"

MARY. When he says, it was "*in his trouble*" that he prepared such great things "for the house of the Lord."

MAMA. The result of the counsels given by him, not to Solomon only, but to the lately faulty "princes of Israel,"—it will be gratifying for us to trace, in the unparalleled energy and liberality,

with which the darling purpose of David's heart was carried into effect.

Let us close our reading with the concluding words of this animating address.—"Set your heart and soul to seek the Lord your God. Arise, therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord. Is not the Lord your God with you?"—an admonition adapted alike to the Israelite of old, and the Christian of our day; to the latter of whom is committed—conjointly with a Divine artificer—and founded "on the rock that is higher than he"—the erection of a nobler structure, than the boasted temple of Solomon; even that "building up of himself in his most holy faith," by which our "vile bodies" can become the "temples of the Holy Ghost"—and the whole fabric of the united Christian community, "fitly framed together, groweth up" into "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

MORNING TWENTY-THIRD.

LESSON.—1st Chronicles, Chapters xxviii and xxix.

MAMA. We have, in these chapters, a most pleasing and every-way characteristic account, of the means adopted by the pious monarch of Israel, in his declining years, for securing to his people, after him, the blessings of good government; and for impressing on his youthful successor, the fundamental principle of his own sovereignty that—"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

How worthy of David is the superiority to petty jealousies, (too often entertained even by parents towards those who are to succeed them) which prompted the inauguration during his own life, of the son whom "God had chosen" to sit upon his throne! And how noble, as well as pious, is the recognition thus distinctly made, that "it is by the Lord, kings reign," and that the "kingdoms of the earth are His," and, that from Him, as its only legitimate source, come the "power and might," and "honour," of princes. To whatever

source these may by others be referred, let us, at least, "always remember," with pious David, that it is "in the hand of God, to make great, and to give strength unto all."

But we must accompany him regularly through the solemn measure by which the close of his chequered life was adorned and dignified. To whom did he deem it proper to announce the decision of the Almighty respecting the succession of Solomon?

MARY. The "princes of Israel, and the princes of the tribes," and captains, and stewards, and officers, and "mighty and valiant men."

MAMA. Yes; in short, all those whose weight and authority in the kingdom, rendered their being apprized of the Divine intention, a matter of propriety—though not even with such, did it lie to dispute or to confirm it.

How beautiful are the terms in which the venerable monarch addresses this imposing assembly of the rank, and wisdom, and valour, of his kingdom,—his more aged contemporaries among whom, he calls his "brethren," and the younger, who had grown up under his paternal sway,—his "people!"

But, does even the pleasing subject of the exaltation of the favourite son of his love and of his old age, occupy the first place in his address?

MARY. No. He first tells them, that it had been "in his heart" to build "an house of rest for the ark of the Lord, and for the footstool of their God,"—but that God had not allowed him to fulfil it. And you know, Mama, we saw yesterday that it *was* because of his wars and bloodshed.

MAMA. Yes; and we have it again on his own unquestionable authority. But beware of the wilful error which has led some to exult over, as a stigma on the *pardoned* "blood-guiltiness" of David—a prohibition expressly founded on the sanguinary character of his warlike reign.

How remarkably does he go on, ascribing "honour to whom" alone "honour is due"—a truth too oft n lost sight of?

MARY. He reminds them, that God had first "chosen Judah to be the ruler, and of Judah, the house of his father, and among the sons of his father, liked *him*, to make him king over all Israel."

MAMA. And could any chain of reasoning, founded on known facts, better prepare them for the recognition of Jehovah's unquestionable right, to select from among the "many sons"—the gift of whom, from the same hand, David gratefully acknowledges—his younger son, Solomon, to sit after him on the throne? But, to

place this beyond the possibility of cavil, what is that throne emphatically here called?

MARY. The "throne of *the kingdom of the Lord* over Israel."

MAMA. And on what conditions had He, who "doeth as he will in all the kingdoms of the earth," promised to "establish" the delegated sovereignty of Solomon?

MARY. If he should be "constant to do God's commandments and judgments."

MAMA. And in what manner (do we learn from the next verse) should a monarch, thus laudably disposed, be seconded by a loyal people?

MARY. "Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep and *seek for* all the commandments of the Lord your God." Mama, I think I know why David says, "seek for" here, because, for want of "seeking," you know they had lately forgotten all about the atonement for their souls.

MAMA. A good conjecture! and, at all events, an admonition never to be too strongly enforced.

But, turning from the people thus solemnly admonished, how affectionately does the heart of the father pour out upon the head of his darling son, the invaluable result of a life of discipline

and experience in the ways of God! Read me entire, this epitome of wisdom, derived from heavenly teaching, during seventy years of unparalleled vicissitude.

MARY. "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth the imaginations of the thoughts.

"If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."

MAMA. Let this admonition, Mary, be graved in your heart. Nor let the merciful provision made in the blessed Gospel, for the possible return of those who have once forsaken their God, to his throne of mercy—be made an "occasion of sin," by the more enlightened Christian.

To what work of piety does David, as his first kingly duty, direct his son's attention?

MARY. "The house of God's sanctuary," and he gave his son the "pattern" of everything about it.

MAMA. Where had this shepherd-warrior —this man of toilsome and perpetual wanderings and conflicts, acquired a knowledge of the arts of peace, and science of decoration, which made

the building constructed by his directions, a model to all nations, and the "praise of the whole earth?"

MARY. Oh! he had all the pattern "by the Spirit," and he says, a little further on, that "the Lord made him understand it *in writing by his hand.*" How could that be?

MAMA. Is this the first time that a literal example of a similar divine communication is mentioned in Scripture?

MARY. No. The commandments on the tables of stone, were written "by *the finger of God;*" and it says God shewed a pattern of the tabernacle also, to Moses, up in the mount.

MAMA. The whole transaction is, in both cases, expressed under material imagery to adapt it to our comprehension. But while "hand," and "finger," are manifestly terms inapplicable to "Him who is a spirit"—and as a "spirit" only, can manifest himself unto men—yet it is surely as easy to conceive of His power being exercised, to call into existence precise models for an earthly structure—as to summon into being, and reduce to form, the very elements of which that earth is composed.

From the inestimable value, and *minute application under express Divine sanction,* of the treasures of gold and silver devoted by the pious

heart of David, to the adornment of God's sanctuary—we may draw a deep, and enduring lesson. Are such costly embellishments exacted by Him, as indispensible to, or even acceptable in his external service?

MARY. No. His churches are too many, to be so fine; and besides, we know that He does not care now, for gold and silver.

MAMA. But why did He *ever* "care for them" Mary—(to borrow your childish, but I hope not irreverent expression?) Why did the Lord of heaven and earth, under a darker and preliminary dispensation, promulgated among a gross and carnal people—exact, and receive with every testimony of approbation—the costliest offerings it was in that people's power to bestow? and bid them deck his chosen sanctuary, with all that was most "rich and rare" from amid the profusion of his own illimitable bounty? Was it, think you, that the Christian, of after and more enlightened times, might "serve him with that which cost him nothing?" Did the God for whose house of old, mines were ransacked, by His own command, till the "pure gold" (*alone* reckoned worthy of being there employed) was so profusely lavished, that "silver was not any thing accounted of, and was as the stones of the streets for abundance"—intend to shadow forth by this earthly

splendour, no future spiritual tribute, more precious, and (to the wayward heart of man) involving greater self-denial than dedicated heaps of perishable gold? Depend upon it Mary, that He who now dispenses alike with riches, and with sacrifice—will be content with no less an offering, than the "hearts which he hath made;" and that by the "pure gold" with which the meanest vessels in the sanctuary of old were at least externally coated (if not actually composed)—is typified that spotless and inestimable "covering" of a more perfect righteousness—by which alone the Christian worshipper is fitted to appear before God.

But was the liberality with which the costliest offerings were "prepared" for the future dwelling of Jehovah—"of his own proper good," by him who had "set his affections on the house of his God"—confined to David?

MARY. No, no. The "chief of the fathers and princes," and all the great men, offered willingly, "and all the people rejoiced because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord—and David the king also rejoiced with great joy."

MAMA. And has no memorial of this ray of pious joy, by which the declining years of David's perturbed life were cheered and gilded—come down to urge and animate us, to similar alacrity in God's service?

MARY. Yes, the beautiful prayer which David made to God, first, for giving them every good thing, and then, for "putting it in their hearts" to return Him a part of what was "all his own."

MAMA. And can we read it, Mary, and admire, as all must do, its unfeigned humility—"Lord, who am I, and what is my people?"—its heartfelt gratitude—"for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee"—its acknowledgement of the Divine supremacy, "Thine O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty"—and the devout concluding wish, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our fathers—*keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee*"—and not feel disposed to echo it, with all a Christian's added warmth and fervour?

Is there indeed any temporal "good thing" bestowed on the Israelites of old—any profusion, however great, of perishable silver and gold—which can for a moment compare with the richer treasures of knowledge, and civilization, and peace, showered down by the same Almighty hand, on the happier race, among whom it is *our* good fortune to be born? Or do not even these, sink utterly eclipsed, before the bright and glorious

realities of that heavenly temple above, in whose building and adornment, every Christian is summoned—like the Jews of old—to be a "willing" participator? For these, may it indeed be said to us, as unto them—"Now bless the Lord your God?" and well may we—even as they, "bless the Lord God of our fathers, bow down our heads, and worship, and rejoice!"

But what important event of a temporal nature was appropriately ushered in by the joyful sacrifice which followed David's prayer?

MARY. It says "they made Solomon king the *second time* and anointed him." When was he made king before?

MAMA. This alludes to his public designation, to the kingly office, mentioned in our former chapter—which would in all probability have been considered quite sufficient to ensure his peaceful succession, on his father's death, to the vacant throne—but for a distressing revolt and usurpation, (noticed in the book of Kings) attempted by his now eldest brother, Adonijah.

Into the particulars of this it is not necessary minutely to enter. Suffice it that this young man, next in order of birth to Absalom, (whom in beauty and presumption he resembled) closely imitated him in his mad career of rebellion—saying, "I will be king"—"preparing him horses

and chariots"—and under the cover of sacrifice, drawing to his standard many of the chief persons in Israel—among others alas! the hitherto faithful, though sanguinary Joab—and (sad to relate) Abiathar the priest—whose wanderings with the 'ephod' in the train of the persecuted David, had long been rewarded by the highest office in the restored and beautified sanctuary!

But, this rash insurrection having been happily terminated, by the prudent interposition with the aged king, of Nathan the prophet and Bathsheba—and the magnanimous pardon by Solomon of his ambitious brother—we must return to what is here further said, of the inauguration of the future king of Israel.

MARY. "He sat on the throne as king, instead of David his father, and prospered, and all Israel obeyed him.

"And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly, in the sight of all Israel."

MAMA. We will reserve for our next reading, the account of his hitherto unequalled majesty; and the splendid inauguration hymn, in which, though penned in the fondness of parental partiality, by David—"great things" concerning a "greater far than Solomon," are unconsciously uttered.

But surely we cannot close the history of Da-

vid—"with his reign, and his might, and the times that went over him"—without casting a brief glance back over the chequered life, we have so minutely, and I trust, edifyingly traced. And how can we better sum this up, than in his own beautiful and impressive picture, beginning from (or rather before) the cradle, and terminating in a vista of glory, extending beyond the grave!

"I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

"Thine eyes did see my substance, being yet imperfect, and in thy book, all my members were written.

"Thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope, when I was on my mother's breast.

"I laid me down and slept, I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.

"Thou hast searched me and known me, thou compassest my path, and art acquainted with all my ways.

"Thou didst chuse David thy servant, and took him from the sheep-folds.

"Thou didst teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.

"Thou saidst, I have found David my servant, and with my holy oil I have anointed him.

"For God is the judge, he putteth down one, and setteth up another.

"Thou hast maintained my cause, and my right; thou sattest on thy throne, judging right.

"False witnesses rose against me, they laid to my charge things I knew not.

"They returned me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul.

"In my distress I called on the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice from his temple, and my cry came up before him.

"He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me.

"He brought me forth into a large place, he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

"Lord! by thy favour thou hadst made my mountain to stand strong; thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.

"The sorrows of hell compassed me about, the snares of death prevented me.

"But I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

"For this shall every one that is godly, pray unto thee in a time when thou mayst be found.

"The Lord has chastened me sore, but he hath not delivered me over unto death.

"I have preached righteousness in the great

congregation; I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest.

"The Lord hath sworn in truth to David, of the fruit of thy body, will I set on thy throne.

"Behold thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, surely every man in his best estate is altogether vanity.

"My flesh and heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

MORNING TWENTY-FOURTH.

LESSON.—Psalm lxxii. 2d Chron. Chapters i. ii. and iii.

MAMA. We could not more appropriately, or edifyingly usher in the record of the singular favour with which the young monarch of Israel was regarded by God—than by reading entire, as we have done, the beautiful hymn of mingled supplication and triumph, in which his pious father poured out his dying acknowledgments to the God of his own salvation; and unconsciously, perhaps, caught through the dim veil of his immediate successor's earthly glories, a glimpse of the spiritual reign of that "greater than Solomon," to whose "kingdom" it is, by Christians, unanimously applied.

There are few things in Scripture which will more amply repay our study than the gradual manner in which, in this sublime composition, its pious author is borne, by the Holy Spirit, beyond the simple parental aspirations after heavenly wisdom for his mortal offspring, with which it opens, and the *true* though glowing description of

the future prosperity and extent of his dominion —to expressions towards its close, too inapplicable to human character or sovereignty to have been uttered (even by a parent) in reference to any but that illustrious "Seed"—by whose very lips, it was ages after, unanswerably asked, "If David calleth him 'Lord,' how then is he his son?"

The primary fulfilment of the earlier portion of the hymn, in the "righteous judgment,"—"abundance of peace,"—and "dominion from sea to sea," —of the literal son of David—as well as the homage paid to his supremacy by the kings of Tarshish and the Isles," and the voluntary gifts of the more distant queen of Sheba—will soon be before us; and ought to be gratefully traced by the Christian, as a pleasing earnest of the yet uncompleted, but far more extensive and enduring glories of the kingdom of Him, whose "name shall be continued as long as the sun"—in whom "all men shall be blessed"—and whom "all nations" will one day unite in calling "blessed."

What conclusive proof does our first chapter afford, that it was not in vain David had with dying breath implored, "Give the king thy judgments, O God: and thy righteousness unto the king's son?

MARY. Because, Mama, Solomon must have had wisdom from God, even before he himself

asked it; else he could not have made so wise a choice.

MAMA. True; not even the counsels of Nathan, and example of David, unaided by a higher power, would have thus early taught the heart of the young king, the lesson he has left to the youth of all ages, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, for she is more precious than rubies; and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared to her."

But we are not left to infer the prevalence of a "right spirit," and of that "fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom" in Solomon. How were they visibly manifested?

MARY. By his "gathering all the congregation of Israel, and offering a thousand burnt offerings on the brazen altar at Gibeon." This was very right, Mama; but how strange that the "tabernacle" and "altar" should still be there, and the ark at Jerusalem!

MAMA. On this point, all the researches of commentators have failed to inform us; but that the "place was holy," and the sacrifice an accepted one, the vision vouchsafed on the spot to Solomon, sufficiently proves. Was the "wisdom," thus made his "early only choice," the sole gift conferred upon the young king, by "Him who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not?"

MARY. No. Because he had "*not* asked riches, or wealth, or honour, or long life," God was to give them to him, "such as none of the kings had that were before him, nor should any after him have the like."

MAMA. What a noble rebuke is here indirectly given, to the covetousness, and ambition, and selfishness, by which human wishes are governed and animated in so lamentable a degree—when the absence from the heart, of base and sordid desires, is made by God the express ground of a munificence, the more boundless for being unsolicited!

What remarkable admonition of our Lord, testifies to the Christian, that the Divine estimate of a wise object of pursuit, is the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?"

MARY. I can't think of one just at this moment; do tell me.

MAMA. "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness—and all these things" (worldly comforts and necessaries) "shall be added unto you."

The extent to which the united promise of wisdom and greatness, was fulfilled in the case of Solomon—might have been gathered (even had the scripture record of them perished) from the reverential, nay, superstitious esteem in which

his name is yet held in every eastern country; where not only is his fame—a rare thing for a pacific monarch—extolled above that of mighty conquerors—but in addition to earthly sway, supernatural dominion, (by his wisdom and spells) over the spirits of earth and air—is ignorantly ascribed to him.

MARY. Mama; what did Solomon, who had no wars, want with so many chariots and horses? Was it not wrong to have them?

MAMA. Superfluous, perhaps; though as his pacific reign deprived him of any temptation to "put his trust in them," they formed, probably, only a harmless branch of that surpassing state, by which he was distinguished above all the neighbouring monarchs—and an outlet for some of that redundant wealth which had made, we are told, "silver and gold in Jerusalem as plenteous as stones." Indeed, the whole seems to have been connected with that lucrative "traffic," in which their settled condition, now for the first time permitted the Israelites to embark; and by which the nation was, under Solomon, so prodigiously enriched, and its fame extended to the most distant lands.

MARY. I am glad to see by our next chapter, that Solomon did not forget his father's injunctions, to "begin and build God's house." What

immense numbers he must have "told out" to "bear burdens," and "hew stones"—when they required "three thousand six hundred overseers!"

MAMA. The "bearing of burdens," Mary, was then a most essential portion of the labour of every great undertaking; especially in a country like Judea, where horses were entirely confined to purposes of war, or state, and mechanical inventions had not yet superseded human exertions. How, indeed, under such circumstances—the prodigious works of antiquity (far transcending modern undertakings) were achieved—would have ever remained a mystery, but for the scripture records of the immense population engaged in their accomplishment.

But whom did Solomon enlist as a powerful, and most necessary coadjutor, in his great enterprize?

MARY. "Huram, king of Tyre;" his father's old friend, I suppose, who had given David "cedars" for his own house already.

MAMA. And how clearly is the wisdom, as well as piety, of Solomon evinced, by the beautiful manner in which he sets forth to this foreign prince, the greatness of Him, for whom His own gracious encouragement alone, could have warranted the preparing a dwelling—and enumerates

the sacred purposes to which the matchless building was to be devoted! Had the proud and civilized inhabitants of wealthy Tyre, think you—had all the philosophers and sages of pagan antiquity, even so much as conceived the idea of One only God, "whom the heaven of heavens could not contain?"

MARY. Oh! no. They worshipped a thousand, and thought every one lived in "houses made with hands," or in "groves," or in "hills."

MAMA. Do you recollect the peculiar "abomination of the Zidonians"—who, being closely connected with "Tyre" by habits and position, worshipped the same false deities?

MARY. I remember it, Mama, by your telling me, that Jezebel's father, the king of the "Zidonians," was called "Eth-Baal," after the national God.

MAMA. You see the use of these apparently trifling particulars being recorded and remembered.

MARY. But, Mama, I rather hope that Huram, (through David's means) knew and worshipped God; for he says, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel that made heaven and earth."

MAMA. Your charitable conjecture has been adopted by many—though, alas! such compli-

mentary tributes to the deities of neighbouring nations were a frequent fruit of the toleration springing from polytheism.

But how did "Huram" (*son*, we find, to the king of the same name, who had made alliance with David) comply with the request of Solomon —so flattering to the superior skill and refinement of Tyrian artificers?

MARY. He sent him a man (who must have been half a Jew, for his mother was of the "tribe of Dan") who was skilful to work in gold, and silver, and brass, and iron; in stone and timber, and in *purple* . . . ."

MAMA. Stay, Mary; are you aware of any peculiarity in the last part of this enumeration?

MARY. Surely I have read somewhere about "Tyrian purple" as famous—what was it?

MAMA. A precious dye, long unpossessed by other nations—and the basis of which (though supposed to be a shell-fish peculiar to the Tyrian seas) is not yet precisely agreed on. Its rarity and costliness, (chiefly reserved for the royal robes of monarchs, which, to this day, continue to bear its colour)—explain its employment by the command of God, in the curtains of his holy tabernacle, and the garments of his anointed priests.

But were "dyed garments of Tyre," and artificers to prepare them, the only precious contri-

bution, to be made by this "king of the isles," towards the building of the projected temple?

MARY. No, Mama. Cedars of Lebanon could be got nowhere else than from him, and his servants were "skilled to cut them." But why was Solomon obliged to supply them with food?

MAMA. For this simple reason (which might have occurred even to you) that hosts of labourers on a craggy and precipitous mountain, covered with forests, could not be maintained but by supplies from other quarters. And as Tyre, powerful and wealthy as she was, occupied a barren "rock of the sea," (now, according to wonderful prophecy, used only by "fishers for drying their nets,")—the "corn, wine, and oil," in which Judea, we know, abounded, were naturally exchanged for Tyrian labour and skill.

How was the timber of these distant mountain forests, to reach Jerusalem?

MARY. In "floats by sea, to Joppa." What is a "float," Mama?

MAMA. Another name for a "raft," Mary; a contrivance by which huge logs, rudely attached together, are "floated" down many of the great rivers of Europe and America, a distance sometimes of many hundred miles. If you had seen, as I have—these floating masses, on which houses, (inhabited for the months that the voyage lasts,

by entire families) are erected—you would have had an idea, though a faint one perhaps, of the "floats," which wafted along the "coasts of Tyre and Sidon," to the sea-port of Joppa, the prostrate forests of Lebanon.

Whom did Solomon chiefly employ, in these laborious, and distant works?

MARY. The "strangers that were in the land of Israel." I suppose, Mama, some of the captive "Ammonites" that David took and made slaves of.

MAMA. Very probably, as the "saws" and "axes" he has been gratuitously accused of employing *on* his prisoners, much more naturally point out the servile tasks to which they were subjected. The word "strangers" has also been supposed to include the descendants of the "mixed multitude," who, we know, accompanied the children of Israel into the promised land—and the proselyted remnant of the original possessors of Canaan; some of whom, (as we learn from the characters of "Araunah the Jebusite," and "Uriah the Hittite," were not unworthy to concur in the erection of a temple to the true and living God.

Let us now gather, from our next chapter, the precise site of this magnificent edifice. Where did Solomon "begin to build?"

MARY. "At Jerusalem, in Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father; in the thrashing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

MAMA. And was this the only angelic manifestation of the Divine presence, recorded of this celebrated mountain?

MARY. Let me think, Mama! Abraham was told to get up and offer Isaac on a mountain God "would tell him of, in the land of Moriah." Was this the same?

MAMA. It has always been so considered—as the sanctity, conferred upon it by the mysterious transaction, and the name of "Jehovah-jireh," (the Lord will provide) bestowed by Abraham, in commemoration of the *substituted sacrifice*—survived even the occupation of its site by the Canaanites—and no doubt formed a chief feature in the praiseworthy anxiety of David, to number this "mount of the Lord" among his earliest conquests, on coming to the throne. At all events, it was now solemnly consecrated, by the express command of Him, whose name it bore; and a "place," we find, had been thenceforth "prepared" there, by David, for the future temple.

Of the details of the building itself—though from the minutest of them, edification has been curiously deduced—we shall only notice the remarkable gradations of external magnificence

(corresponding with those of internal sanctity) which distinguished the three grand portions into which the temple of Jerusalem was divided.

Does the mention of "Solomon's porch" recall any New Testament facts to your remembrance?

MARY. Yes; our Lord often "walked" there, especially in winter, and delivered discourses; so I suppose it was a public resort.

MAMA. Yes; it was there that great "multitudes ran together," on the miracle of healing the lame man, by John and Peter; and that the latter took occasion of the concourse, to preach Christ crucified.

But it is styled in the Acts, the "porch that was called Solomon's,"—was it really the one mentioned here?

MARY. I once thought so—till you explained about Solomon's beautiful temple being destroyed, and another built long after—not nearly so handsome. Mama—since Christ even was grieved that the one in his time should not have "a stone left on another,"—what must the first have been!

MAMA. Of the melancholy inferiority of the second, (noble as it was) we have an affecting proof, in the weeping, on its completion, of the "old men," who had seen the glories of its original prototype.

But besides the "porch," (scrupulously restored

under the former name in the new edifice) and i outer court—common to all "strangers," no idolaters,—what are we to understand by th "greater house" here mentioned, as only "ceiled with fir-tree," though overlaid with pure gold?

MARY. Was not this where the priests might go every day, to minister; and where the "shew bread," and "altar of incense," and "golden candlestick" stood?

MAMA. Yes; the whole external symbols of God's visible worship.

But what place, more sacred still, where the "high priest" alone might enter, and that but "once a-year;"—was the magnificence and treasure of Solomon exhausted to adorn?

MARY. The "most holy house." Is not this called in the New Testament, the "Holy of holies?"

MAMA. It is; and as the earthly residence of the "mercy seat" of "Him that sitteth between the cherubim"—a type of the "heavenly places," into which our "great High Priest" has "once for all" ascended.

The "vail," then concealing this inner sanctuary from every human eye, has, (costly as it was) thanks to the same mighty agency, been long since "rent in twain." But one chief purpose of its description here, and of all the minute parti-

culars handed down to us, of the awfully exclusive character of the Jewish worship and economy —should be to quicken our gratitude, that no "vail" now interposes between us and a reconciled God, save the gracious mildness under which his majesty is shrouded, in the human character and ministry of Christ; that the "daily sacrifice," for which such costly and dutiful provision was made by the pious king of Israel, has for ages been abolished by an "oblation" more pure and perfect far—that the "lavers" of purification, so essential under the Jewish dispensation, are superseded by our "robes" having been "made white in the blood of the Lamb,"—that the typical "candlestick," with its golden lamps, has long since been eclipsed by the diffusion of spiritual light from the "sun of righteousness"—and that the prostrate, though long venerable "altars" of Judea, are now "set up" in all their revived holiness—in every converted and sanctified bosom!

MORNING TWENTY-FIFTH.

LESSON.—1st Kings, Chapters viii. and ix.

MAMA. These chapters, my dear, which it is impossible, without extreme injury to their general effect, to disjoin—contain an account of the completion of the greatest work ever undertaken by an individual, and of the noblest recorded intercourse, between a favoured servant of the Most High, and the God he had "delighted to honour;" by the "obedience" which is "better than sacrifice," to his minutest, as well as greatest commands.

What formed the first necessary step towards the consecration of the now completed temple?

MARY. Assembling all "the men of Israel," that they might "bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion."

MAMA. The "assembly," my dear, was indeed general, including all the chief persons, and indeed the whole adult population of Judea. But were they, or any of them, competent to

remove the ark to its new and permanent residence?

MARY. Oh! no; I did not mean that. The "priests and Levites" brought it, and all the other holy things.

MAMA. Do you find any thing striking and satisfactory in the enumeration?

MARY. It says the "tabernacle of the congregation" was brought too. Was this the one which David made, or Moses' old one, from Gibeon?

MAMA. The phrase is one which would hardly have been applied to the mere temporary erection of David; and it is generally supposed, that the venerable and long exiled companion of the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness, now shared in the "rest" prepared for the ark, by the piety of two successive monarchs.

But, Mary, in what awful, nay (had it not been associated in their hearts and memories, with the most gracious recollections) almost appalling manner, did Jehovah testify the removal of the symbol of His presence, to the place he had "chosen, to put his name there?"

MARY. The "priests could not stand to minister, because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord."

MAMA. And what merciful interposition was this double manifestation, of "thick darkness,"

on the one hand, and unbearable light on other, calculated to recall?

MARY. The "pillar of cloud," you know, in wilderness; and the fire that was in it, which ligh them always by night, and alarmed their enemi

MAMA. And by which, (as we then remarke the varying aspects and results of the blessed Go pel, to God's enemies and people, in more moder times, are clearly shadowed forth; to the one, "a savour of death" and condemnation—to the other, "light and life," and a guide to the heavenly Canaan above.

But the presence (by his well-known symbol) of Jehovah, having been duly recognized by Solomon, let us follow, with a portion at least of the holy fervour by which it was dictated—his sublime and, as a human composition, unequalled prayer. And to appreciate fully its impressive effect on the assembled thousands of Israel, we must borrow, (from the corresponding, but more diffuse account in the Chronicles) the circumstance of a "brazen scaffold" having been erected; on which the king, in the presence of all the people, spread forth his hands, and kneeling, addressed to God this memorable supplication, beginning at the 23d verse of our first chapter.

Read, and fix on your memory, its noble introductory paragraph.

MARY. "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in heaven above, or in the earth beneath; who keepest covenant with thy servants that walk before thee with their whole heart."

MAMA. And mark the deep humility with which a young king, after a seven years' reign of unparalleled prosperity and glory, at the close of an undertaking unrivalled for extent and magnificence—when (if ever) exultation might have been pardonable, and "boasting" not "excluded,"—refers all the success with which his labours had been crowned, to the piety and prayers of his father, and the promises and faithfulness of God. And how does he sublimely acknowledge (under the guidance of celestial wisdom, while all the surrounding nations indulged in the grossest conceptions of God,) that the universe itself scarce formed an adequate temple for the worship of Him, who had nevertheless condescended, in "very deed," to "dwell on earth!"

But, even from this grand and humbling conviction, let us beware of drawing, as some have unhappily done, conclusions unfavourable to the appointed and visible worship of that God, for whom (even while confessing his omnipresence) Solomon had felt it to be a duty to prepare a "house." To the futile remark of the despiser of ordinances, that *God is everywhere*, let us be prepared to

reply, that it is *where two or three are gathered in his name,* that he has promised to vouchsafe his *saving* presence.

How does this prevailing sentiment manifest itself throughout the whole of Solomon's admirable prayer?

MARY. He prays, that God's "eyes would be open night and day towards his house," and, that he would "hear in heaven, his dwelling-place," the prayers his servants should make *towards* it. Does that not mean *in* it, Mama?

MAMA. It does, my dear; as in *almost* every instance, which occurs in the prayer, supplication is actually spoken of, as made within its walls; though, with a perverse inaccuracy very uncommon in our translators, the margin tells us they have substituted "in," at the only place where "towards" gives the true reading, viz. when Israel should be absent from God's house, and "smitten before their enemies."

But does your memory not supply you with a remarkable instance of successful prayer, made "*towards*" even the site of this then ruined temple, by a persecuted but dauntless servant of God?

MARY. Oh! you mean Daniel, who opened his window, and prayed three times a-day "with his face towards Jerusalem."

MAMA. Yes, Mary; so *literally*, and we may judge from the miraculous deliverance which followed—*acceptably* were the words of Solomon's petition adhered to, by succeeding generations.

But what still more important lesson, might all who heard him draw from the cause, carefully assigned by him, for every afflictive visitation by which God might see fit to chastise a forgetful people?

MARY. He always says it would be "because they had sinned," and that they must "confess and turn from their sins," before God would "hear in heaven, and forgive."

MAMA. Do you perceive in any part of this comprehensive model of devotion, a decided encouragement to *individual* prayer, even in seasons of national calamity?

MARY. I suppose you mean, when he says "what prayer or supplication shall be made by *any man*, which shall know every one the plague of his own heart;" and when he prays that God would give "every man according to his ways," for He only "knoweth the heart."

MAMA. Just so, Mary; a practical refutation of the common error, that national reformation can begin otherwise than by individual piety and penitence.

MARY. Mama! it is beautiful of Solomon to

Let us, on the strength of these great and glorious privileges, accompany Solomon in the last and most important part of his petition, viz. that God would "incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways;" that he would "not leave, nor forsake us," but that the supplication thus made by, and for us, "may be nigh unto the Lord our God, day and night."

MARY. Mama! I cannot help wondering how "two and twenty thousand oxen" *could* be offered up at one time; or why so many were required. Surely God would know the greatness of Solomon's gratitude, without so many beasts being slain!

MAMA. Two things are plain, Mary, from this hasty and inconsiderate remark of yours. First, you have not observed, that it was only on the *eighth day* that the innumerable multitude summoned by Solomon, were dismissed to their homes; and secondly, that the expenditure of animals you are tempted to consider wasteful, included all which were slaughtered during the time for the support of so many thousand people. If you had remembered that on an occasion of not greater (though possibly more *general* solemnity)—viz. the inauguration of David at Hebron) 340,000 Israelites had assembled around their king—any extent of provision which could

be dedicated by princely munificence, to the double purpose—(*always* conjoined in the "peace-offerings" on joyful occasions)—of a tribute to Heaven, and a festal banquet for the assembled congregation—would not appear exaggerated.

The "burnt-offerings" (as I have before explained to you) or *propitiatory sacrifice*—had preceded the prayer of dedication; and consisted of "sheep and oxen that could not be numbered for multitude," freely given, according to their ability, by both monarch and people. But in the subsequent account of the festal sacrifices, the "fat" only, of the "peace-offerings," is distinctly mentioned as consumed on the altar; and to such an extent did even this amount, that the middle space of the court was expressly "hallowed" for its reception.

MARY. I understand now, Mama; and so I should have done before. But I don't quite know why the people are said to have been sent away on the eighth day, and yet the feast to have lasted "fourteen?"

MAMA. It has been calculated, that two great feasts of the Jews, each containing seven days, were at this time held together; viz. the new one called henceforward the "dedication;" and that of Tabernacles, whose actual period had arrived. And it was on the "eighth" of this latter feast

(which terminated the period of "fourteen") th the people, blessing and blessed by their monarc joyfully returned to their homes.

But we must hasten to the gracious answe which it pleased the God of heaven and earth to make to the "prayer and supplication," so devoutly addressed to Him by Solomon. What was its tenor?

MARY. God appeared to him a second time, and said that He had "hallowed the house he had built, to put his name there for ever,"—and that "His eyes and His heart should be there perpetually."

MAMA. Magnificent promises, Mary; coming from Him who, as Solomon truly said, "keepeth covenant and mercy with his servants that *walk before him with all their heart.*" But was this condition at all lost sight of, in the reply of Him, with whom "there is no variableness?"

MARY. No, Mama. If they "turned from following God," and would not keep his commandments, and went after other gods to worship them—He was to "cut off Israel out of the land." And Israel should be a "proverb and a by-word" among all people—and every one that passed "that house which was so high, should be astonished and *hiss*, and say, "why hath the Lord God done this unto this land, and this house?"

Mama—this came frightfully true! Josephus says the very Romans thought the Jews must have provoked their gods beyond measure—to be so horribly punished.

MAMA. Alas! Mary! we need not go so far for examples, of sin and punishment, as the degenerate Jews of our Lord's time, or the infatuated multitudes who perished (to avenge his death) by heathen hands, on the polluted floor of his very temple. Solomon—the pious enlightened Solomon—the author of the finest prayer ever uttered by the lips of man—lived to be himself an idolater! and to be, by the predicted dismemberment of his son's kingdom—the first example of retributive justice under the covenant he had broken!

Our difficulty in conceiving this, and similar outrageous departures from known duty in others —only proves our very limited knowledge of ourselves; and had such not been recorded, of even eminent Scripture characters, it is doubtful whether the extent of human depravity would ever have flashed wholesome but painful conviction on the reluctant mind of man.

Of this reluctance I am myself a proof, in the willingness with which I would have closed the record of the life of Solomon, with the edifying

scene, in which we have seen him take so exalted a part.

But the great moral lesson afforded, by the apostacy and defection—(at the suggestion of heathen wives) of him whom, in this chapter, we find too scrupulous, to permit his *proselyted* Egyptian queen to reside within the precincts of the holy city—is recorded for the "reproof and conviction" of generations unborn; and is one of the many inspired comments on that most frequently forgotten, and therefore most necessary of Scripture admonitions—"Be not high-minded, but fear."

MORNING TWENTY-SIXTH.

LESSON.—1st Kings, Chapters x. and xi.

MARY. Mama; I am quite sorry, like you, that we could not end the history of Solomon, with his dedication of the temple. For though it is pleasant to hear of his greatness, and of the Queen of Sheba coming so far to admire his wisdom—it is all spoiled by his forsaking God, and worshipping idols.

MAMA. That he ever absolutely forsook and renounced the God of his father, the "God of heaven and earth," whom he had invoked in the presence of assembled thousands—and proclaimed to the distant "Kings of Tyre and the Isles"—seems an extent of folly and wickedness, inconsistent with even the temporal forbearance exercised towards him by that God, for the sake of his "oath to David." But the toleration, and countenance, afforded by one so apparently "rooted

and grounded in the faith" of Jehovah—to the impure rites of his heathen wives, and their adoption into revolting conjunction, with the service of Him, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who chargeth His angels with folly"—amply justifies, to every mind, the "rending away" from the now apostate line of David, of the bulk of their profaned, and forfeited kingdom.

But before advancing to the melancholy conclusion of a life, which he who had thus misused it, might well pronounce to be "vanity and vexation"—we must go back to gather, were it only for the purpose of salutary contrast—from the last three verses of the former chapter, some indication of the sources and amount of the excessive wealth by which the heart of Solomon seems to have been, at length, corrupted, and "turned aside." Indeed the riches here enumerated, were more than indirectly, a "snare" to their possessor; since of that pomp and magnificence, for which they afforded the means, the multiplicity of "strange women" by whom his heart was fatally alienated—formed a customary eastern branch—wives (many of whom never beheld their nominal master) being there "multiplied" by great people, like horses, elephants, or other animals kept for parade and state.

MARY. Mama, where was "Ophir," from which Solomon's ships brought all that quantity of gold? Is it any place known now?

MAMA. Its precise situation Mary, has occupied more pages than we can afford to bestow on it words. It has naturally excited the curiosity of the learned, and the cupidity of the merchant; and some have supposed the Island of Socotra on the coast of Africa, and others that of Ceylon, on the shores of India, to have been the "Ophir" of the Bible. But among the many lights which have been thrown on Scripture geography by modern travels—those of Bruce especially, in the little known regions of Africa—may be included the idea, (sanctioned by the most eminent modern geographers) that to reach the wealthy "Ophir" the ships had only to proceed along the northern and western shores of Africa, as far as the region still retaining the significant name of the "gold coast"—a voyage much more adapted to the infant state of navigation, than crossing the ocean to the distant shores of India. The length of time occupied, viz. three years—has been satisfactorily accounted for by the great difficulties presented to unskilful navigators, by the currents and monsoons of the intervening seas; and though no point of doctrine or inference of consequence is happily involved in the discussion—the eluci-

dation of Scripture localities must ever be an interesting adjunct to more important inquiries.

"Eloth," and "Ezion-Geber" to which we are told in the corresponding part of Chronicles, Solomon went in person, to establish, conjointly with the more experienced merchants of Tyre—this lucrative traffic—were cities on the Red Sea, which had been conquered by his father from Edom; when that whole country (in a passage we have accidentally left out) was subdued by David, and his general Joab.

How remarkably Mary, do all these successive conquests, achieved by the armies of the God of Israel—verify the prediction uttered by the Psalmist—while yet himself an outcast and fugitive—as to the final extinction as kingdoms, of the rebel states of "Edom" and "Philistia;" of which last, after his repeated victories, we hear little more in Scripture. Of the more pacific parts of the same prophecy, as to the "gifts" of the "Kings of the Isles," we have had a literal fulfilment, not only in the supplies furnished by "Huram" for the building of the temple—but a voluntary present of "six score talents of gold." And we are now to trace, in the celebrated personal visit of the Queen of Sheba,—not only a striking general coincidence with the glowing language of the 72d Psalm—but a literal accom-

plishment of its minute and remarkable expression —"*One* shall bring him of the gold of Sheba"—indicating that some individual, of sufficient eminence to be thus designated—should be the bearer of the homage.

In whose person do we find this fulfilled?

MARY. The "Queen of Sheba" of course—where was her kingdom?

MAMA. This is as little agreed on, my dear, as the site of "Ophir." Josephus, and the Jews generally say it was in Africa, and the modern Abyssinians, by claiming her as their sovereign, countenance the traditionary belief. But the more general opinion of the learned is in favour of Arabia—a country famous for "spices" as well as for the "camels" by which they were borne—a conjecture which agrees with the epithet bestowed on her by our Lord, of "Queen of the South."

Do you remember for what she is placed by him in advantageous contrast with the "generation" whom he addressed?

MARY. Because she "came from the uttermost ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon" —and they would not hearken to a "greater" who was "here" among them.

MAMA. Let us beware, Mary, lest we share their condemnation; and while seeking to [redacted]

instruction from events and characters the most remote—overlook, or misuse opportunities of edification arising in our own daily history and path.

But what part of the fame of Solomon was it, that attracted this distant princess, and gained for her the commendation of our Saviour?

MARY. It was "concerning the name of the Lord," that she came to "prove him with hard questions," and "communed with him of all that was in her heart."

MAMA. If there be any truth in the former, and national tradition, which places the site of her reign in remote Africa—and ascribes to her the conversion of her Abyssinian subjects—how strikingly is here verified the Psalmist's prediction, of "Ethiopia shall yet stretch out her hands unto God!" Or, if we adopt the other opinion, of her being an Arabian princess, descended from Abraham by his wife Keturah, (by whose son, named "Sheba," the country was first peopled,) how pleasing is it to trace, in one even remotely sprung from the family of the "friend of God"—a desire to be better instructed in the patriarchal faith, of which some faint tradition might have been there preserved!

Be this as it may—she was not disappointed in her pursuit of the wisdom, for which she freely bartered the most precious products of her realm,

and which—like him from whom she came to imbibe it—she justly considered to be more "precious than rubies, and the gain thereof than fine gold." In what terms does she express this conviction, in her parting address to Solomon?

MARY. "Happy are these men, thy servants, which stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom!"

"Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel—therefore he made thee king, to do judgment and justice." Mama; this puts me in mind of the picture in your great Bible, called the "judgment of Solomon." I used to be half afraid to look at it when a child; because I thought the little baby in the picture was to be cut in two. When did the thing happen?

MAMA. Our transition (for more important objects) at once from the book of Samuel to that of Chronicles, and consequent omission of the earlier and corresponding chapters of Kings—made us overlook this singular domestic incident; which is recorded as having taken place immediately after the gift of wisdom from above, was conferred on Solomon.

Do you remember the particulars of the story?

MARY. Oh! yes; they were too strange to be

forgot. Two women living in one house, quarrelled about whose child had been overlaid; and as both wanted the living one, and nobody could tell whose it really was, Solomon pretended to order it to be divided between them. But the *real* mother begged him for God's sake to do no such thing; as she would rather go without it than see it murdered before her eyes.

MAMA. Exactly. I see you are mistress, in your own way, of the leading circumstances of this singular decision, so creditable to the discernment of Solomon. I will tell you in return, a little Jewish legend (of the many preserved in their "traditions" about the same monarch); in which, if *true*, (which I am far from asserting)—somewhat of the same acuteness was manifested.

The Queen of Sheba, it is said, among other "hard questions" of a more solemn and dignified cast, with which she "proved" Solomon, defied him, at the farewell banquet, given by him on her departure—to distinguish between two garlands, one of natural, the other of fictitious flowers—woven by her attendant damsels. The eye of the monarch was completely baffled by the resemblance; but his characteristic sagacity only shone the more conspicuous. He ordered the lattices of the hall, on pretence of heat—to be opened; and

the bees thus admitted from the adjacent gardens —at once detected the imposture, by settling exclusively on their natural food.

MARY. Thank you, Mama. I did not think artificial flowers had been as old as Solomon; and I shall never see any now without thinking of this pretty story.

But no wonder the queen went away astonished at Solomon's magnificence, as well as his wisdom! It quite dazzles one only to read of it.

MAMA. Yes, Mary; were not all this wealth attended with the depressing consciousness, (before alluded to) that to its unwholesome and corrupting influx and effects—Solomon ultimately owed the loss of God's favour to himself, and of the kingdom to his posterity. To "exceed all the kings of the earth for riches and wisdom"—is indeed to be placed on a perilous eminence! And if even the judgment and integrity of a Solomon, proved unequal to sustain him on it—how little can human elevation be an object of legitimate envy or desire!

We must now come to the immediate cause of this melancholy declension—not only that excessive monopoly of wives by an individual, by which the wonderful equality in numbers between the two sexes, established by Providence for ensuring the primitive institution of marriage, is

often in eastern countries "made of none effect"—but the selection of them by Solomon from among those Canaanite idolaters, with whom it had been expressly forbidden the Israelites to form connexions—and of whom they had been emphatically warned, that they would "surely turn away their heart after their gods."

MARY. That they did, Mama! One can scarcely believe it is Solomon, who could "go after" "Astaroth," and "Milcom," and "Chemosh," and all the other "abominations"—and even build high places for them, opposite the very temple of Jerusalem!

MAMA. Ay, Mary; and on what "hill" think you, were these iniquitous shrines erected? Even on that "Mount of Olives," where a "greater than Solomon" contemplated Jerusalem, and wept over yet uncommitted sins, more "scarlet" still in their dye, than the apostacies of the *now* no longer idolatrous Jews!

But do you remember the peculiarly offensive character in the eyes of the Lord, of "Moloch"—the idol whose temple crowned the summit of Mount Olivet;—or the odious nature of the rites, for which the adjacent valley of "Tophet," or "Hinnom"—was devoted to utter desolation by an indignant God?

MARY. Was not that the idol the Jews

"made their children pass through the fire" to, or burnt them alive, as you told me they did in that place long after?

MAMA. The same, Mary; and if the "sacrifices," by which the wives of the infatuated old king propitiated these monsters, were at all akin to those described by the prophets—no wonder the outraged Majesty of heaven and earth was "angry with Solomon!"

MARY. It was much more wonderful, I think, that God did not strike him dead immediately, instead of sparing his life, and leaving him the kingdom all his days, for his father's sake.

MAMA. It is the nature of the Divine mercy and forbearance, Mary, always to transcend our finite comprehension. And if we may trust to the deeply affecting warnings scattered throughout the later writings of Solomon, respecting the mischiefs attendant on unhallowed connexions—such as "the mouth of strange women is a deep pit; *he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein*;"—and, "I find more *bitter than death* the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: *whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her*, but he that sinneth shall be taken by her;"—and subjoin to this hard-wrung testimony of a convicted conscience. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso *confesseth and forsaketh them shall have* mercy."—it may be in

our power to hope, with some, that penitence akin to his illustrious father's, averted from his own head the penal consequences of guilt. But, like his father's, it was not destined to go unpunished; for, from this time forth, his before prosperous and pacific reign is disturbed by continual and harassing insurrections.

Passing over the earlier of these, under "Hadad" and "Rezon," and the galling circumstance of the former being harboured and encouraged under the roof of Solomon's own Egyptian father-in-law—what feature did you observe in the denunciation of the God whom he had offended, calculated to make the "rending away" of his hereditary kingdom more grievous and painful?

MARY. It was to be given to his "servant." That meant "Jereboam," did it not? I see here all about Ahijah promising him ten tribes; and you know we referred to it long ago, when you first began to explain the Bible to me.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, we have now reached, (after many interesting, and I trust not wholly unprofitable, conversations) the point of Scripture at which we originally set out; though my random selection for our first readings, of an isolated portion of holy writ, has obliged us sometimes to retrace our steps, in an awkward manner, which I have often since regretted.

I am not sure, however, that though chronolo-

gical order and convenience would have dictated (had I foreseen their extent) a different arrangement of our joint studies—the important end of the gradual unfolding of scriptural truth, would have been materially advanced by a more regular course of proceeding.

The Book of "Kings," with which we accidentally commenced, contains much of lively narration, attractive to the taste, and adapted to the comprehension of childhood; and was therefore well calculated to awaken the interest which it was my chief object to excite. Your own choice and wishes next led us to explore the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness; and the "wondrous things out of God's law," which were thus "made to pass before us," —not only admitted of, but required that deeper and more spiritual application, of which advancing age had made you capable. The Books of "Joshua" and "Judges," again, by their chequered and narrative character, and occasional obscurities, served to exercise the awakened spirit of enquiry, which habit and experience had fostered; and to pave the way for the satisfactory, and I trust not delusive evidence of a maturer judgment in spiritual things, manifested during our joint investigation of the histories of David and Solomon. With these, we shall now bid adieu to the

Old Testament; and if life and leisure are granted, turn to the perusal of the blessed pages of the New, with all the advantages for their study, afforded by increased acquaintance with the preparatory dispensation by which they were ushered in.

That any Christian, as too many do, should habitually neglect and undervalue that portion of Holy Writ, out of whose "good treasure" our Lord himself disdained not perpetually to bring forth for the edification of his hearers, "things new and old"—("old" in their venerable authority—"new" in his exquisite adaptation of them to passing events and circumstances)—has always seemed to me voluntarily to forego an inestimable source, both of instruction and pleasure. Nor can, indeed, most parts of the New Testament, the epistles especially, be even intelligible, without intimate familiarity with the Jewish Scriptures.

To these epistles, the easier at least among them, I hope, ere long, to direct your attention; when a review—as detailed at least, as we have bestowed on the biographies of mere human beings—shall have heightened our reverence and deepened our love, for the perfect character of that "Lord," who, to borrow the expressive phrase of Solomon —"in *very deed* dwelt among men."

In the meantime, I know not that we can more impressively or appropriately close our present course of study, than by adopting as its termination, the beautiful words of "Ecclesiastes," in which Solomon, under the title of the "Preacher"—(one which he had lived to consider more honourable than that of the mightiest monarch) records his solemn protest against all the "vanity of vanities" which he had "found under the sun;" exhorts to that "remembering of the Creator in the days of youth," which he had before declared to be the "beginning of wisdom;" describes with a force of imagery, which has been the admiration of successive ages, the "loosing of the silver cord," and breaking of the golden bowl at the fountain," indicative of the final decay of that curious but perishable fabric, the earthly tabernacle of our race; and after summing up in "fearing God and keeping the commandments," the "whole duty of man"—leaves to those, who, like himself, may have been seduced from the paths of godliness,—the awful admonition, that "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

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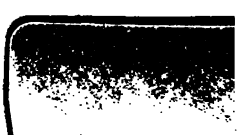
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